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WHITE OTTER

ELMER RUSSELL GREGOR

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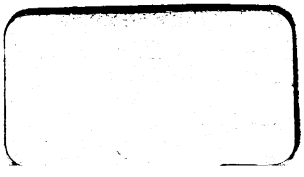

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Oct. 1917

From Uncle Headly & Alters -

To L. Parkton

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"The hunt became a mad break-neck scramble across the rocky plain."

[Page 143]

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WHITE OTTER

BY

ELMER RUSSELL GREGOR

AUTHOR OF "CAMPING ON WESTERN TRAILS," "THE RED ARROW," ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY

D. C. HUTCHISON

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

NEW YORK LONDON

1917

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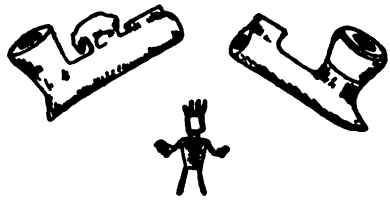

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WHITE OTTER

CHAPTER I

RIDERS OF THE NIGHT

IT was the time of the new-grass moon. The long cold winter had finally passed, and the season of abundance was at hand. The Sioux gave thanks to the Great Mystery with song and dance. They knew that vast herds of buffaloes would soon appear from the south, and then every want would be supplied. The hunters were already making plans for the great buffalo drive which would provide the camp with meat for many days.

It was at this season that White Otter, the grandson of Wolf Robe, the famous Ogalala war chief, had planned to visit the Minneconjoux camp to see his friends, Sun Bird and his brother Little Raven. The three young warriors had shared many perilous adventures the

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previous year, when White Otter won fame by recovering the Red Arrow, a Sioux medicine trophy which had been stolen by the Pawnees, and Sun Bird rescued his brother from captivity. At that time the lads pledged themselves to an undying friendship, and Sun Bird and Little Raven accompanied White Otter to the Ogalala village. When they departed White Otter gave each two splendid ponies, and promised to visit them the following spring. Now the time was at hand and he was eager to go.

When Wolf Robe learned White Otter's intention he said: "It is good; the Minneconjoux are our brothers. Curly Horse, their chief, is a great man. You will see many brave warriors in that camp. Sun Bird and Little Raven are your friends. They will tell their people about you. Go and tell the Minneconjoux that Wolf Robe is thinking about them."

Two days later White Otter set out upon his journey. As he was anxious to make a good appearance before the proud people whom he planned to visit, he had arrayed himself with elaborate care. He was dressed in all the finery of a Sioux warrior. He wore soft doeskin leg-

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gings extending to his thighs, a buckskin breech-cloth, moccasins gayly decorated with dyed deer-hair, a rawhide belt from which hung his knife-sheath, his weaselskin pouch containing his fire-sticks and a small buckskin bag filled with dried meat. His bow and arrows were in a wolfskin case which was slung across his back, and at his side hung his buffalo-hide war shield. His robe was a beautifully tanned pelt of the grizzly bear. His hair was arranged in two braids which were bound with otter fur, and fastened to his scalp-lock was a tail-feather of the golden eagle, which proclaimed him a warrior. He rode his fastest war pony, a nervous little roan, and in its mane and tail he had fastened many hawk feathers, and strips of fur. Thus equipped, the lad of seventeen winters was an imposing figure. Tall and manly, he carried himself with the commanding dignity which he had inherited from his father, Standing Buffalo, and his grandfather, Wolf Robe, the stern old war chief of the Ogalalas.

As White Otter left his grandfather's lodge and rode through the center of the village the people greeted him with shouts of approval. He

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had won an everlasting place in their hearts, and they looked upon him with pride and affection. Most of the boys, many of the old men and some of the women followed him from the village, singing his praise and calling his name. Once he had left the camp, however, White Otter soon urged his pony into a canter, and rode away from his enthusiastic admirers.

"The Minneconjoux will see that White Otter, the grandson of the great war chief of the Ogalalas, is a man," said Yellow Horse, the medicine-man.

"Yes, he is brave like his father, Standing Buffalo, who has gone on the Long Trail," replied Wolf Robe, as he looked admiringly after his grandson.

White Otter rode away with a light heart, for he was overjoyed at the thought of rejoining his friends. He had never been to the Minneconjoux village, but he knew that it was far to the westward near the great mountains, and as Wolf Robe had carefully described certain prominent landmarks along the route he had little fear of missing his destination. The young Sioux had heard many tales relating to

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the courage and valor of his distant tribesmen, and he was eager to meet the famous warriors of whom he had heard. He was particularly anxious to see Curly Horse, the renowned Minneconjoux war chief, and Sun Bird's father, Rain Crow, a famous medicine-man.

At midday White Otter came to a great village of the little Underground People, the prairie dogs. He rode slowly between the small earth lodges, and saw hundreds of the eccentric little creatures sitting up to watch him. One old gray-whiskered sentinel chattered shrilly as the pony approached, and finally dove frantically into his burrow. Most of the Underground People followed his example. White Otter laughed at their fright. He stopped his pony and waited for them to reappear. When the gray nose of the cautious old patriarch finally came in sight, the young Sioux called a greeting.

"Ho, you Underground People. Do you see who I am? Ho, you old man. Why do you chatter like a frightened old woman? Come out and call to your people. Tell them that White Otter is their friend. See, at my side

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is the scalp of your enemy, the weasel. See, on my back is the scalp of your enemy, the wolf. See, in my hair is a feather of your enemy, the great war bird. I am telling you about this so that you can tell it to your children. Now I am going away from here. Keep my words in your heart."

As White Otter rode slowly on his way all the little Underground People came from their burrows, and sat up on the low mounds of earth to watch him. When he looked back and saw them he laughed, and raised his hand in greeting. Then he cantered away and disappeared from sight over a low rise of the plain. He rode until sunset, when he saw the first of the landmarks which Wolf Robe had described: it was a small grove of aspens which he had been told concealed a water-hole.

Although he was still on the hunting grounds of his people, and believed he had little to fear from prowling enemies, White Otter approached the spot with his customary caution. He knew that carelessness had betrayed more than one brave warrior into the hands of his foes, and he determined to run no unnecessary

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risks. Before exposing himself within arrow range, therefore, he rode slowly around the grove, watching for a sign of concealed foes, and studying the ground for fresh pony tracks. When he had ridden several times around the spot without discovering anything to rouse his suspicions, he drew his weapons, and dropped to the side of his pony. Then he walked boldly toward the trees. He found the grove unoccupied, and as it contained a pool of fresh water he decided to camp there for the night.

It was barely dark, however, when White Otter's fancied security was shattered by a noise which filled him with alarm. Rushing to the edge of the plain to listen, he caught the unmistakable sound of galloping hoofs. The truth instantly flashed into his mind. A company of horsemen were approaching his camp-site. Were they friends or foes? White Otter dared not wait to learn. He realized that safety lay in flight. There was not a moment to spare, for the riders would soon be within bow-shot. Running to his pony, he fastened a buckskin muzzle over its nose, and leaped upon its back. Then he rode cautiously out upon the plain.

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After he had gone a short distance the young Sioux stopped to assure himself that the unknown horsemen were continuing in his direction. He was surprised to learn that the sounds had ceased. However, the stillness failed to deceive him. He knew that, like himself, the riders were taking every precaution against a surprise. He believed that the main company had stopped some distance out on the plain to wait until one or more unmounted scouts could steal up to the water-hole to reconnoiter. Fearing that these scouts might circle about the grove and eventually discover him, he turned his pony toward the east and rode slowly away.

White Otter made his way toward a deep ravine which he had crossed a short time before he reached the water-hole. He planned to picket his pony in the ravine, and then hurry across the plain on foot to reconnoiter the camp of the mysterious horsemen. He had not gone far, however, when he heard an owl calling in the vicinity of the pool, and he knew that the scouts who had been sent forward to reconnoiter were calling their companions. The signal was answered by the cry of a coyote on the

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open plain, and it was evident that the riders were advancing toward the grove.

Soon afterward White Otter found the ravine, and picketed his pony. Then he climbed to the plain, and set out to spy upon the camp in the aspen grove. As he made his way cautiously through the dark he tried to guess the identity of the people who had driven him from the water-hole. It was possible that they might prove to be a party of Sioux hunters from the Minneconjoux village, but White Otter determined to risk nothing on the chance. He believed it far more probable that they were a scouting party of Crows or Blackfeet from the north who had ventured upon the Sioux hunting grounds to look for buffaloes.

White Otter hurried across the vast star-lit plain with a firm determination to solve the riddle. He realized that to learn what he wished to know he must expose himself to considerable danger, but he was without fear. He had already established an enviable reputation as a warrior, and had passed through many perilous adventures on the war trail.

The young Sioux guided himself by the stars,

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and soon arrived in the general vicinity of the aspen grove. When he believed that he was within hailing distance, he stopped to reconnoiter. He stood a long time peering anxiously into the dark to catch the glow of a camp-fire, and listening for some sound which would tell him the exact whereabouts of the people whom he wished to see. His efforts were fruitless, however, and he realized that he was farther from the camp than he had supposed. As there was nothing to gain by loitering where he was, he continued across the plain.

White Otter had gone some distance farther, when he was suddenly stopped by the shrill whinny of a horse. It sounded directly ahead of him, but apparently quite far away. Believing that the call had come from the vicinity of the grove, White Otter looked eagerly in that direction. For a few moments he saw only the vast black plain, and the star-studded heavens. Then he canght a gleam of light far off to the westward. It filled his heart with joy, for he knew that he had located the camp. It also assured him that the horsemen had actually stopped in the grove, and he felt greatly re-

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lieved. More than once he had been troubled by the fear that the travelers had merely visited the pool to refresh their ponies and had then resumed their journey. However, now that he was certain of finding them in the grove, he was more perplexed than before. He knew that a hostile war party would be almost sure to travel by night, especially when they found themselves in the very center of the Sioux hunting grounds. Therefore, White Otter concluded that these people were hunters either from the Minneconjoux village, or from that of one of the hostile tribes farther to the north.

Having definitely located the camp, the young Sioux determined to approach it without further delay. He knew that to learn the identity of these people he must get near enough to reconnoiter while the light from the fire made it possible to see them. Therefore, he drew his weapons and advanced toward the water-hole. As he finally neared the grove he stopped at the end of every third stride to listen. Then when he heard the ponies stamping restlessly he knew that he was within arrow-range, and he sank noiselessly to the ground. He realized that

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if these people were enemies they had probably stationed scouts about the grove, and he feared to move lest he might encounter one of the alert sentinels at any moment.

As White Otter lay upon the plain determining the safest way to approach the camp, he heard sounds which led him to suspect that the horsemen were preparing to leave the grove. At the same time he noted that they were placing fresh fuel upon the fire. The maneuver made him suspicious. "These people are not Sioux," he told himself.

Fearing that they would go away before he could identify them, the eager lad rose and hurried toward the grove. Before he had covered half the distance, however, the unknown riders mounted their ponies and rode away at a gallop. They went toward the south, and White Otter felt sure that they were foes.

The young Sioux listened with a heavy heart until the mocking hoof-beats finally died away in the distance, and then he made his way to the little pool. The fire was blazing fiercely, and he felt certain that it had been left to give the impression that the riders were encamped

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in the grove. Their hasty departure convinced him that the horsemen believed themselves pursued. It seemed as if his earlier fears had been confirmed. These people were evidently retreating from a larger company of foes. The thought made White Otter serious. He wondered if his tribesmen, the Minneconjoux, were involved in the mystery.

However, as White Otter saw no way of learning what he wished to know until he reached the Minneconjoux camp, he told himself that he must be patient. He concealed himself near the pool and waited some time, hoping that a pursuing company of horsemen might soon appear. But the possibility that they might be Crows or Blackfeet caused him considerable uneasiness, and he finally determined to return to his pony and spend the balance of the night in the ravine.

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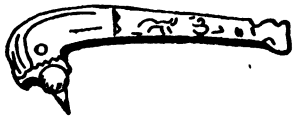

CHAPTER II

THE WAR PARTY

AT daylight White Otter crept cautiously up the side of the gully to survey the plain. Far away toward the west he saw the little grove of aspens, and he wondered if another company of riders were encamped at the water-hole. He searched the sky above the trees for a trace of smoke, but he believed that the precaution was useless, for he told himself that a war party on the trail of foes would never betray themselves in such a manner. White Otter watched a long time, but saw nothing except a distant band of antelope, and several animals which he thought were prairie wolves. Soon after sunrise he led his pony from the ravine, and rode away.

Once again the young Sioux circled cautiously about the aspens, and when he had made sure that the spot was free of foes he entered the grove. He and his pony drank heartily at the

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little pool, and then resumed their journey toward the Minneconjoux camp. White Otter was still pondering upon the identity of the mysterious riders. He was sorely disappointed at the failure of his bold reconnaissance the previous night. However, he consoled himself with the thought that his friends might be able to tell him something about the horsemen. The possibility made him impatient, and he hurried along at a rapid pace. He kept a sharp watch for buffaloes, but it was evident that those great beasts were still farther south. Antelope were plentiful, but as White Otter had a sufficient supply of dried meat he made no attempt to hunt them.

Later in the day as he was crossing a wide stretch of grassy prairie White Otter saw a solitary horseman watching him from the summit of a distant knoll. Convinced that he had already been discovered, he realized that it would be folly to attempt to hide. He stopped his pony, therefore, and waited to see what the stranger would do. The latter, however, was apparently using the same tactics against White Otter. Thus many minutes passed while the

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two riders sat motionless on their ponies, and watched with distrust and suspicion. They were too far apart to identify each other, but neither showed any inclination to approach nearer. At last the stranger turned his pony, and disappeared over the crest of the rise.

White Otter did not know exactly what to do. The appearance of the lone horseman had filled him with all sorts of alarming suspicions. First of all, he felt quite sure that the rider was a scout reconnoitering in advance of a war party. The idea suggested several interesting possibilities. Perhaps it was a company of Sioux. The thought thrilled him. He realized, however, that he must not permit the hope to betray him. He feared it more likely that he was confronted by a roving band of foes. As the horseman had made no attempt to conceal himself, White Otter believed that he was endeavoring to decoy him into a trap. It was quite probable that a large body of warriors were lurking behind the low ridge over which the rider had disappeared. The thought was somewhat alarming, and for a moment White Otter was tempted to flee. As the plain was level and

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open, however, and he was well beyond bow-shot of the ridge, he believed that he was in little immediate danger after all. He saw that it would be impossible for an enemy to steal upon him unobserved, and the assurance made him bold. Banishing all idea of retreating until he learned more about the lone horseman, he determined to hold his ground and wait for further developments.

It was not long before the rider again showed himself on the summit of the knoll. A moment afterward he was joined by a companion. The appearance of the second horseman convinced White Otter that a war party was concealed behind the ridge. He watched anxiously to learn what the two scouts intended to do.

In a few moments one of the riders raised his right hand above his head and moved it slowly to the right and left. White Otter instantly understood the signal, which meant, "I do not know you. Who are you?" Unwilling to proclaim himself until he knew more about the strangers, the young Sioux replied by repeating the question. Then the horseman who was conversing with him again raised his right hand,

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but this time he held it motionless. It was the sign for friendship. The second horseman waved his robe, and then spread it upon the ground. White Otter understood it as an invitation to come and talk with them. He began to hope that he was in communication with a company of his own people. Still he realized that he must take every precaution before exposing himself. Therefore, he answered the invitation by clasping his hands and raising them above his head, which meant, "Are you peaceful?" The horseman pledged himself by repeating the signal.

"My heart tells me that these people are Sioux," White Otter assured himself.

Then he again raised his right hand above his head, and swept it forward and downward to his side, which meant, "Come here." He watched eagerly while the horsemen seemed to be considering the invitation. At length one of the riders turned his pony down the ridge and rode toward White Otter. The latter saw that his invitation had been accepted, and he determined to be very cautious. When the horseman finally stopped, and signaled for

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White Otter to advance, the lad made no reply. He had no intention of placing himself one stride nearer the ridge until he knew the intentions of the strangers. As he showed no inclination to meet the horseman, therefore, the latter betrayed considerable impatience. After repeating the sign for friendship a number of times, and asking White Otter to meet him, he finally turned to rejoin his companion.

In the meantime White Otter had been studying him closely, and although he could not be sure at that distance he believed that the disgruntled warrior was a Sioux. Therefore, as the latter showed every intention of terminating the interview, White Otter made haste to pacify him. As the scout looked back to make sure that he was not followed, the young Sioux rode slowly forward.

The stranger instantly wheeled his pony and waited for White Otter to approach. The latter advanced with the alert, watchful caution of a fox. He made no attempt to conceal his suspicions, and to reassure him the unknown rider raised his hand in token of peace. Neither White Otter nor the warrior who await-

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ed him had drawn their weapons, for to have done so under the circumstances would have been a grave breach of etiquette. However, White Otter stopped before he was within arrow-range, and looked searchingly at the man before him. He had all the characteristics of a Sioux, but the cautious lad determined to take nothing for granted. As he was now sufficiently near to open negotiations in the sign language, White Otter extended his right hand a short distance and turned the open palm slowly from right to left. Then he pointed toward the rider. The signs meant, "Who are you?"

The horseman replied by raising his right hand to the level of his shoulder, and drawing his flat palm swiftly across his throat, which was the sign for the great Sioux nation.

The announcement filled White Otter's heart with joy. Still he determined to demand further proof before venturing within arrow-range. He, too, made the sign for Sioux. Then he elevated his hands and brought the tips of his fingers together so that his palms formed the familiar outlines of a lodge or tepee, which was the sign for village. Then he repeated the signs

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for "Who are you?" Thus he demanded to know from what tribe or village the stranger had come.

The latter extended his clenched fists in front of him, and placed the right thumb upon the left thumb, twisting his hands to represent the motion for grinding corn. Then he opened his hands, and held them before him with the thumbs uppermost and the fingers pointing forward. He moved his hands by wrist action so that the fingers moved downward and to the front, and then raised them and moved his hands slightly to the right. These motions were repeated several times.

White Otter uttered an involuntary exclamation of delight, for he knew that the motions were the signs for Minneconjoux Sioux. Then as the rider was demanding an answer, White Otter pointed to the ground, brought his clenched right hand, with the back outward, in front of his face and snapped his fingers toward his eyes. It was the symbol for Ogalala Sioux.

Having convinced each other that there was no need for further caution, the two riders advanced. As they came within easy hailing dis-

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tance the Minneconjoux scout raised his hand and called a greeting.

"Ho, my brother, I see that you are a Sioux. It is good; we will talk together."

"Ho, my brother, I have heard your words. They are the words of my people. Yes, I will talk with you," said White Otter, as he hurried forward to meet his tribesman.

A few moments later they dismounted and clasped hands. White Otter saw that the Minneconjoux was a tall, broad-shouldered warrior in the prime of life. He looked as sinewy and active as one of the great mountain cats, and White Otter recalled the stories he had heard about this powerful tribe of the Dacotah nation.

"I see that you are a young man. But you wear a feather of the great war bird, and I know that you are a warrior. I do not know who you are, but I will tell you that I am Feather Dog. I have fought in many battles. You say that you are an Ogalala. Those people are very brave. I have talked with the great chief Wolf Robe," said Feather Dog.

"Feather Dog, I have listened to your words.

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I believe you are a brave warrior. The great chief Wolf Robe is my grandfather. I am White Otter; my father was Standing Buffalo. You say that you are a Minneconjoux. I am going to your village to see the great chief Curly Horse, and Rain Crow, the medicine-man. I will meet my brothers, Sun Bird and Little Raven," replied White Otter.

"Yes, now I know about you," said Feather Dog. "You are young, but you are a great warrior. I have heard my people talk about you. You have done a great thing. You call Sun Bird and Little Raven your brothers. It is true. I will tell you about them."

Feather Dog told White Otter that he and Sitting Eagle, who was still watching from the summit of the ridge, were scouting in advance of a small Minneconjoux war party. He said that they were in pursuit of a band of Utes from the south, who had stolen a number of Sioux ponies. When White Otter heard that, he knew at once the identity of the mysterious riders at the water-hole.

"I will tell you about those people," he told Feather Dog.

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"Yes, tell me about them," the Minneconjoux scout said, eagerly.

"One sun back I camped over there," said White Otter, pointing toward the east. "It is a place my grandfather told me about. Over there are many of the trees whose leaves always tremble, and some good water. Do you know about it?"

"Yes, I have been there many times," said Feather Dog.

"When I was at that place I heard some ponies. Yes, it was dark, and I said: 'Perhaps it is my brothers, the Minneconjoux.' But I did not wait there. No, I rode away, and left my pony in a ravine. Then I went back to look at those people. When I got near them I heard them going away. Then I hurried ahead to see them. But it was dark, and they went away. I said: 'Those people are not Sioux. They are running away. Perhaps my brothers, the Minneconjoux, are chasing them.' Now I know about it," said White Otter.

"Come, we will go over there, and tell this thing to Sitting Eagle," proposed Feather Dog.

As they cantered across the plain White Ot-

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ter learned that the war party was farther toward the west, as the Minneconjoux believed that the Utes had retreated along the edge of the great mountains. White Otter was overjoyed to learn that both Sun Bird and Little Raven were in the war party. Feather Dog told him that among the ponies carried away by the Utes was one which White Otter had presented to Sun Bird. Feather Dog said that a boy was driving the animals toward the village, when the Utes rode out of a gully and ran off the Minneconjoux ponies.

"I do not know those people," said White Otter.

"No, they do not go to your country. They are enemies of my people," replied Feather Dog.

"Then I will go to fight them," declared the loyal young Sioux.

A few moments afterward they joined Sitting Eagle on the crest of the ridge. Feather Dog soon told his companion what White Otter had seen, and Sitting Eagle listened with much interest. He, too, was a man in his prime, and his splendid physique and bold flashing eyes

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filled his young tribesman with admiration. When Feather Dog finished speaking Sitting Eagle remained silent, while his eyes searched the face of the youthful Ogalala. White Otter met his gaze unflinchingly, and the stern Minneconjoux scout seemed impressed by the lad's boldness.

"Feather Dog has told me your words. I have listened. They are good. I know about you. You have done a great thing. Yes, the Sioux will talk about it a long time. You say that you have found the trail of our enemies, the Black Faces. It is good. See, our people are coming over there," he said, as he extended his arm toward the west.

A company of horsemen were riding rapidly toward them. When they saw the three riders on the ridge they seemed to grow suspicious. They were still too far away to recognize Sitting Eagle and Feather Dog. It was evident that they intended to take every precaution. They had already stopped, and were apparently gathered in council. Then Sitting Eagle rode down the ridge and galloped to meet them. This maneuver soon dispelled their sus-

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picions, and when the scout raised his voice in the Sioux war cry, his companions came on at the top speed of their ponies.

White Otter watched them with considerable emotion. Even at a distance he recognized the two friends with whom he had shared so many adventures. As they approached he was tempted to ride across the plain to meet them, but he saw Feather Dog watching him closely, and he determined to conceal his feelings. However, when the approaching horsemen learned the identity of the rider with Feather Dog, Sun Bird and Little Raven urged their ponies to a furious sprint and raced forward in advance of their companions. When they reached the top of the ridge they jumped to the ground and ran forward to greet their comrade.

"My brother, I have taken your hand, and my heart is filled with sunshine," said Sun Bird.

"I have been thinking about you a long time," replied White Otter. "Now I am talking with you. It is good; your words are like the songs of the birds in my ears."

"See, my brother, I am riding the pony which

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you gave me. Yes, I am a warrior. But I am not thinking about these things. I am singing in my heart because I have taken your hand," said Little Raven.

"Your words are the words of a true friend. I will keep them in my heart," replied White Otter.

Then as the warriors gathered about them White Otter told of his experience at the water-hole. Convinced that the mysterious horsemen were the Utes who had stolen the ponies, the war party determined to ride to the aspen grove. The sun was still some distance above the horizon, and they felt sure that they would reach the camp-site soon after dark. As there was little chance of overtaking the Utes before they reached their village, the daring Sioux resolved to follow them to their camp, and retaliate for the affront by running off a large bunch of ponies. They planned to spend the night at the water-hole, therefore, and set out on the trail of their foes at dawn. When White Otter learned their intention he volunteered to join the war party, and was speedily accepted.

"When I see you riding beside me I feel very

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brave," said Sun Bird. "It is good; we will take many ponies from our enemies, the Black Faces."

"Tell me about those people," said White Otter.

Sun Bird told him that they lived several days' journey toward the south. He said that they were smaller than the Sioux, and very dark. "My people call them the Black Faces," said Sun Bird. He added that they were very fearless, and he said that the Minneconjoux had fought many furious battles with them.

"It is good," said White Otter. "I will fight these brave people. Then I will tell my people about it."

When the war party finally reached the water-hole night had already fallen, and the wily Minneconjoux halted out of arrow-range, while Feather Dog and Sitting Eagle went forward to investigate. It was not long before they signaled that all was well, and the war party advanced. After picketing the ponies in the timber, the Sioux made a fire of dry sticks, and broiled a quantity of antelope meat which they had secured earlier in the day. When they

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finished eating they stationed several warriors to guard the horses, and then the balance of the company wrapped themselves in their robes and went to sleep.

"Perhaps we will have a hard fight to get those ponies," said Sun Bird, as he lay down beside White Otter.

"A Sioux is always ready to fight," replied White Otter.

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CHAPTER III

TRAILING THE ENEMY

THE Sioux set out on the trail at daybreak. White Otter thrilled with pride as he realized that they were about to enter the stronghold of their foes to contend with a force vastly superior in numbers. Sun Bird said that the Minneconjoux war party would have been considerably larger but for a rumor that the Crows were gathering a great war party. Suspecting that those inveterate foes intended to invade their territory, the Sioux feared to leave their village unprotected. He told White Otter that the present company was composed of a few loyal friends, several of whom had lost ponies in the band which had been run off by the Utes. As White Otter saw nothing of Feather Dog and Sitting Eagle he felt sure that they had already departed to scout in advance of the war party.

"Yes, they are as wise as the fox," said Sun

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Bird, when White Otter mentioned their absence. "They will find the Black Faces, and tell us about them."

As the three lads rode along in company they attracted much favorable comment from their companions. They were a striking trio. The young Ogalala was taller and more slender than either of his friends. He lost nothing by comparison, however, for his figure was splendidly proportioned and showed the sinewy strength of the young mountain cat; while the shorter, more compact forms of the Minneconjoux betokened the heavier power of the young bear. It was evident that White Otter and Sun Bird were about the same age, but Little Raven looked several years younger. Sun Bird, like White Otter, wore an eagle feather in his scalp-lock, while Little Raven wore the tail feather of a hawk.

The Sioux had not gone far when they saw one of the scouts signaling from a rise of ground some distance to the south of them. When he had attracted their attention he began to ride his pony in a circle while he waited for them to come up with him.

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"See, that is Feather Dog. He has found something," said Sun Bird.

Then the little company of riders galloped eagerly toward their comrade. When they reached him he led them to a wide meadow-like stretch of sloughy ground, and showed them the fresh hoof-prints of many ponies. The Sioux studied them in silence. It was evident that they were waiting for Feather Dog to tell them what was in his mind.

"There are the tracks of many ponies. Those ponies carried our enemies, the Black Faces. Those people took away two ponies that I know about. Yes, I have used them many times. One of those ponies made that mark," said Feather Dog, stooping and placing his fingers in a hoof-print.

Then his companions dismounted to inspect the track. Upon examining it closely they found that it showed an unusual bulge in the center. Convinced that they were actually on the trail of their foes, the Sioux began to chant their war songs and make boastful threats against the people who had incurred their wrath.

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"What Feather Dog says is true," declared Sun Bird. "Yes, the Black Faces are running toward the mountains."

As the trail led away toward the west, the suggestion received unanimous indorsement. The Sioux suspected that the crafty Utes had attempted to make them the dupes of a wily stratagem. It was evident that the latter had fled to the water-hole solely to confuse their pursuers. White Otter now understood the purpose of the fire which they left blazing in the grove while they fled toward the mountains. However, Feather Dog's wolf-like keenness in following a trail had made their efforts of no avail.

The Sioux waited until Feather Dog had again gone forward in advance of them, and then they rode away toward the south. They kept a sharp watch for foes, for they realized that they were in peril not only from the Utes, but from roving bands of Kiowas and Pawnees as well.

"Perhaps we will see our enemies the Wolf People," said Sun Bird, referring to the latter tribe.

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"We have fought a great battle with those people. I feel it in my heart that we will fight them again," White Otter prophesied grimly.

The day was well advanced before the war party again came into communication with the scouts. Then Feather Dog suddenly appeared from a gully, and rode furiously to and fro. It was the danger signal, and the Sioux knew that he had discovered something which had alarmed him.

"Perhaps we are near our enemies," said Sun Bird. "Feather Dog has seen something. We must be very cautious."

When they reached him he told them that he and Sitting Eagle, who had joined him earlier in the day, had discovered smoke some distance to the south. Sitting Eagle had gone forward to reconnoiter, and Feather Dog advised the war party to wait in the ravine until the scout returned.

"It is the best thing to do," agreed Sun Bird.

"Yes, we must wait until we know about this thing," said White Otter.

The Sioux picketed their ponies in the bot-

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tom of the ravine, and composed themselves to await the return of their comrade. They knew that to be successful they must be patient as well as cautious. Feather Dog pointed out the spot where he had seen the smoke, but it had faded from the sky before the war party arrived.

"Perhaps it was a signal," suggested a warrior named Spotted Elk.

"No, it was different," declared Feather Dog, with conviction.

They watched anxiously for Sitting Eagle, but the day ended and he failed to return. As night closed down the Sioux posted sentinels on both sides of the ravine. Then they waited in silence, straining their ears to catch the first warning of the scout's return. However, as the time passed and he failed to appear some of the younger warriors showed signs of uneasiness.

"Perhaps Sitting Eagle has been captured," suggested Little Raven.

"A Sioux does not turn back until he sees what he goes to know about," said Sun Bird. "Sitting Eagle is as cautious as an old wolf.

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He will come back and tell us about this thing. A warrior must know how to wait."

"You speak wise words. I will keep them in my heart," Little Raven replied, humbly.

The night was far spent when the Sioux were roused by the shrill bark of the little gray fox. It sounded from the east, and seemed close at hand. They listened anxiously, and in a few moments they heard it again. The keenest ear among them could detect no flaw in the call, and they wondered if the animal itself was deceiving them. Then they heard it the third time, and their suspense was ended. They knew it was a signal from their absent tribesman. One of the sentinels barked twice in rapid succession. Then they heard the sound of hoofs, and a few moments later Sitting Eagle led his pony into the ravine.

"You have returned; it is good," said Feather Dog.

"Yes, I have looked at those people," replied Sitting Eagle. "Now I will tell you about it."

He said that after leaving Feather Dog he had advanced across the plain with great caution until he finally discovered a camp situated

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in a scattered growth of timber beside a stream. As he saw a number of lodges among the trees, however, he began to doubt that these were the people whom he wished to find. He knew that a war party setting out to steal ponies would never incumber themselves in that manner. Besides, the lodges implied the presence of women and children. Sitting Eagle was convinced, therefore, that these people were not on the warpath. The thought troubled him. The trail of the people who had stolen the Sioux ponies led in the general direction of this camp. For a time the scout was sorely perplexed. At last he decided that these people were hunters, roaming the plains in search of buffaloes. He believed that the Sioux ponies had been stolen by a company of young warriors from this camp. However, Sitting Eagle realized that his opinions were of no value until he learned whether these people were actually his enemies, the Black Faces. To gain this information he knew that he must approach sufficiently near to recognize them. As it would have been sheer madness to attempt such a maneuver in daylight, he waited until dark. Then he concealed

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his pony, and advanced toward the camp on foot. He gained the edge of the camp in safety, and soon convinced himself that the people who occupied it were his foes, the Utes. Then he looked for evidence to connect them with the theft of the ponies. Determined to supply positive proof to his tribesmen, the daring scout risked his life to obtain the information. Waiting until the fire made it possible to see every detail of the camp, Sitting Eagle crawled forward in the shadows until he could study the band of ponies. It was not long before he discovered the animals which had been stolen from his people. Then having learned all that he wished to know he retreated to his pony, and raced away to join his companions.

"Sitting Eagle has done a good thing," said Feather Dog, as the scout finished his story. "I have listened to his words. Yes, now I know about that smoke. I know about another thing. The Black Faces have made a fire. Yes, they have cooked some meat. Then I know that they will travel easy. It is good; they are not thinking about us. Well, we will follow these people. Perhaps they will stop to hunt. If they

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camp, then we will run off many ponies. But I will tell you another thing. Perhaps they are near the great village. If they meet their people, then I do not know how the thing will be. My brothers, this is what I am thinking about."

"Feather Dog has spoken. He is a great warrior. You have heard his words," said Sun Bird, who appeared to be the leader of the war party. "I believe he has told the thing as it is. We must watch the Black Faces. When it is light perhaps they will go away from that place. Then we will follow them. Now I will ask my brother, Sitting Eagle, to go with me to watch those people. Now I will ask you, my friends, to wait here until we know about this thing. I have finished."

"My brothers, Sun Bird has told you a good thing to do. Yes, he is a good war leader. Now I will go with my brother to watch the Black Faces," declared Sitting Eagle.

"When a war leader speaks his brothers listen," said the warrior, Spotted Elk. "Sun Bird is a young man, but he is a brave warrior. What he says is good. We will do this thing."

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Daylight was close at hand, and Sun Bird and his companion realized that there was not a moment to spare. They knew that they must arrive within sight of the camp and conceal themselves while it was still dark. They sprang upon their ponies, therefore, and rode away at a gallop. Little Raven was eager to accompany them but Sun Bird refused his request. He promised, however, that both White Otter and Little Raven should share the honor of entering the Ute camp to lead out the ponies.

The first hint of daylight was showing in the east as Sitting Eagle finally led Sun Bird to a low ridge within sight of the camp. After they had picketed the ponies the two scouts crawled to the top of the rise to reconnoiter. It was still too dark to see anything beyond bow-range, and they withdrew behind the ridge and waited impatiently for dawn to raise the curtain which concealed their foes.

"Perhaps those people are waiting at that place for buffaloes," suggested Sun Bird. "Perhaps the warriors will ride around and see us. Now it is getting light; we must be as wise as the fox."

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"Yes, we will be very cautious," replied Sitting Eagle.

Darkness was slowly giving way to twilight, and the eager scouts again peered cautiously over the top of the ridge. It was still impossible to locate the camp, but they continued to watch. Each moment the light grew stronger and enabled them to see farther across the plain. At last they saw the trees, and a few moments afterward they discovered the lodges.

"It is good; the Black Faces have not gone away," Sitting Eagle said, with apparent relief.

Soon afterward they saw a thin column of blue smoke rising into the sky. It filled their hearts with hope. They believed that the Utes intended to remain at the stream another day. In that event the Sioux knew that their task would be easier than it would if they were compelled to invade the main Ute village. They watched anxiously, therefore, until they saw a number of horsemen leave the camp and ride away in different directions. This maneuver convinced them that the Utes had no intention of moving the camp.

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"My words have come true," declared Sun Bird. "These people are waiting for buffaloes. Those riders are going out to look around. It is bad; perhaps they will come over here and find us."

"Yes, I believe we are in danger," agreed Sitting Eagle, as he looked anxiously about him in the hope of finding a hiding place.

The wide expanse of sage-grown plain offered little concealment for the ponies, and the Sioux knew that it would be folly to leave the animals in open sight at the base of the ridge. They realized, therefore, that they must take them away before the Ute scouts approached any nearer.

"Now I know how to do this thing," said Sun Bird. "My brother, I will ask you to take the ponies to our people. I will hide here in the sage, and watch the camp. When it is dark you must come back with the war party. You must come ahead, and make the call of the little gray fox. When you hear another fox barking on the ridge, then you will know I am here. Then you must call the war party, and we will go to the camp for the ponies. But if your ears

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tell you nothing, then you will know that I have gone away to follow the Black Faces. This is the best thing to do. I have finished."

"You are a brave warrior and a good war leader," replied Sitting Eagle. "I will do what you tell me. If we do not find you here, then we will follow on the trail. Now I am going away with the ponies."

Sitting Eagle hurried down the ridge, and retreated with the ponies. He was entirely screened from the camp, and was in little danger of being discovered. Sun Bird watched until his comrade finally passed from sight over a distant rise of the plain. Then, feeling sure of Sitting Eagle's safety, the loyal lad concealed himself in a clump of sage, and began the long, tedious vigil that would end at nightfall.

Sun Bird had not been long in concealment when he saw two of the horsemen from the camp approaching the very ridge on which he was hiding. Feeling sure that they would climb the ridge to reconnoiter the country beyond, the young Sioux realized that his predicament was serious. For a moment he thought of crawling down the side of the ridge, and moving out on

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the plain. However, upon second thought, he realized that if he left his hiding place he might be unable to return before dark, and in the meantime the Utes might move their camp. Therefore, he determined to remain where he was.

Having made this bold decision, Sun Bird sought to lessen the chance of discovery by tying branches of sage to his head and shoulders. Then he pressed himself against the ground, and waited for the approaching horsemen, who were already within arrow-range. It was evident that the Utes were making almost directly for his place of concealment. However, Sun Bird had little fear, for he had passed through several similar experiences, and he hoped to be equally fortunate this time.

When the horsemen reached the base of the ridge they stopped, and one dismounted and left his pony with his comrade. A few moments later Sun Bird saw the unmounted warrior crawling directly toward him. The Sioux believed that he had been discovered. An encounter appeared unavoidable. Sun Bird had already fitted an arrow to his bow, and now

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he prepared to drive it through the heart of his foe.

Then the Ute turned aside to avoid some bowlders, and crawled to the crest of the ridge several bow-lengths away. Sun Bird was much relieved to know that he had not been seen. He had no desire to force an encounter, for he knew that even if he were victorious the Utes would learn of his presence in the vicinity of their camp, and then it would be impossible to secure the ponies without a desperate battle.

The Ute peered carefully over the ridge, and Sun Bird smiled as he realized that for the moment he held his foe completely at his mercy. However, he overcame the desire for personal glory, for he knew that the recovery of the Sioux ponies should be his first consideration. A moment afterward the Ute signaled to his companion, and the latter brought the ponies. The two warriors spent some time in earnest conversation, and then they mounted and rode slowly down the ridge. When they reached the level plain they rode away at a gallop.

"That is bad," Sun Bird told himself, as he

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watched them disappear toward the north. Two alarming possibilities suggested themselves to his mind. He feared that the Utes would find the trail of Sitting Eagle, and if they failed in that he feared they might discover his friends in the distant ravine. He encouraged himself with the assurance that the Sioux were far too wise to be caught unawares. However, as the day wore on, and the two scouts failed to return, his uncertainty increased. He knew that they had not gone in search of buffaloes, for in that event they would have ridden toward the south. Furthermore, the haphazard manner in which they had chosen their route led him to suspect that they had originally planned to travel in another direction. Why had they changed? He wondered if they anticipated the appearance of a Sioux war party.

Toward the end of the day all the other riders returned, but the two warriors who had ridden into the north failed to appear. Sun Bird feared that their tardiness betokened a meeting with his friends. The thought kept him in trying suspense. He wondered if there had been a skirmish. Perhaps the Sioux had either

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killed or captured the two Ute scouts. His heart bounded at the possibility. However, he knew that it was equally possible that the Utes had discovered the Sioux war party, and were waiting to learn the strength of the invaders before returning to warn their people.

Twilight was already settling upon the plain when the perplexed young Sioux finally saw two horsemen approaching from the north. As they drew nearer he recognized them as the Ute scouts. They were riding at the top speed of their ponies, and Sun Bird wondered if they were bringing news of the Sioux war party. They crossed the ridge some distance from him, and raced toward the camp, shouting and waving their weapons. A number of people ran out to meet them, and from the general excitement it was evident that the riders brought news of considerable importance.

Sun Bird was greatly disturbed. He knew that if the Ute scouts had discovered his friends the camp would be closely guarded, and it might be impossible to obtain the ponies. He watched with much anxiety, therefore, hoping to get some clew which would enable him to guess the

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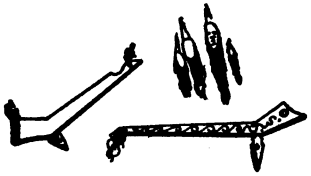
nature of the information which the two horsemen had brought their people.

As darkness fell he waited impatiently for the glow from the Ute camp-fires. When he finally saw them he was filled with delight, for he felt sure that the Utes knew nothing of the approaching war party. Then an alarming doubt entered his mind. He wondered if the crafty Utes were repeating the stratagem which they had employed at the water-hole. Perhaps they were again deserting their camp under cover of the night. It might also be possible that they had learned the weakness of the Sioux in numbers, and were attempting to lure them into a trap. As Sun Bird watched the twinkle of the distant fires he had grave fears for the safety of the courageous little company who were advancing to meet him. Still he saw no way of warning them, for he feared to leave his hiding place lest he should pass his friends in the dark. He waited, therefore, listening eagerly for the signal from Sitting Eagle.



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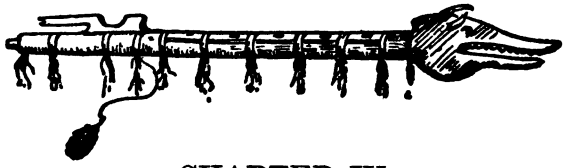

CHAPTER IV

A PERILOUS ADVENTURE

EACH moment seemed an age to the anxious lad watching on the crest of the ridge. The night hush had fallen upon the plain, and the very stillness oppressed him. His mind became a prey to all sorts of gloomy forebodings. He began to give way to his imagination. He feared that he was surrounded by prowling, sharp-eared scouts from the Ute camp, and that some of them had concealed themselves on the ridge to wait for the Sioux war party. The thought startled him. Every few moments he held his breath to listen. The slightest rustling of the sage set his heart beating wildly, but his fear was not for himself. He had already been exposed to sufficient peril to make him indifferent. However, this was the first time he had gone out as a war leader, and he knew that his reputation would suffer severely if disaster befell the little company who had enlisted under

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him. He raised his face toward the vast starry heavens, and asked aid from the Great Mystery.

A few moments later the sharp, snappy bark of the little gray fox sounded through the night. Sun Bird fairly trembled with delight. He felt sure that it was Sitting Eagle, but he determined to take every precaution. He waited, therefore, until the signal had been repeated twice more, and then he knew it was genuine. Fearing to reply from his hiding place, the wily lad crawled stealthily from concealment, and wriggled cautiously down the ridge. Then as he heard nothing to rouse his suspicions he glided away in the direction of the sound. When he had gone an arrow-flight he stopped, and barked twice, very softly. Then he listened for an answer. It came out of the darkness directly ahead of him, and he fitted an arrow to his bow and advanced as noiselessly as a shadow. When he finally heard the soft, guarded tread of a led pony he stopped and uttered a low-voiced challenge.

"If you are a Dacotah you will tell me about something," he said.

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"It is good; what your eyes do not see, your ears must tell you," replied the familiar voice of Sitting Eagle.

A few moments afterward they met. Sitting Eagle said that the war party was waiting some distance back on the plain. When Sun Bird told about the two Ute scouts the older warrior assured him that the Sioux had seen nothing of them. He declared that they had kept a sharp watch, and that it would have been impossible for the Utes to have discovered them without being seen.

"Then I do not know about this thing," acknowledged the perplexed young Sioux.

"Come, I will go up on this ridge and look around," proposed Sitting Eagle.

Then Sitting Eagle surrendered his pony to Sun Bird, and said that he would climb the ridge alone. When Sun Bird objected the older warrior reminded him that one must remain with the pony.

"My brother, you have seen this thing. Now I must see it. Then we can talk about it. Yes, I will ask you to wait here until I come back," said Sitting Eagle.

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"You have been on many war journeys. I will listen to your words," agreed Sun Bird.

A moment later Sitting Eagle disappeared into the night. He was gone a long time. When he returned he said that he had reconnoitered the ridge and the plain on both sides of it, and was convinced that the approach to the Ute camp was unguarded.

"The Black Faces will not know about this thing until we have run off the ponies," said Sitting Eagle. "Now, my brother, I will ask you to wait here. Yes, I am going back to call our friends."

When Sitting Eagle had gone Sun Bird again crawled to the summit of the ridge to watch the distant fires. The actions of the two Ute horsemen still troubled him. He was unable to convince himself that their apparent excitement had nothing to do with the Sioux war party. He dismissed the doubts from his mind, however, for he knew that he would never become a great war leader by giving way to imaginary perils.

"No, when my friends come I will lead them

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to that camp to lead out the ponies," he declared, resolutely.

It was not long before he again heard the call of the little gray fox, and a few moments afterward he joined his friends at the base of the ridge. As he took his pony from Sitting Eagle, Sun Bird realized that he must assume command of the enterprise. He knew that the time for doubting had passed, and that he must fill the hearts of his comrades with courage and confidence.

"My brothers, you have come with me to do a great thing. It is good. Yes, we will take many ponies from our enemies, the Black Faces. Pretty soon you will see the fires in that camp. The Black Faces are like children; they do not know how to watch. My brothers, I will ask you to follow me to that camp. Perhaps we will fight. Then we will remember that we are Dacotahs. I have finished," said Sun Bird.

"Sun Bird has spoken like a brave war leader. I believe we are about to do a great thing," said Feather Dog.

Then Sun Bird called White Otter to his side, and together they led the gallant little company

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forward to invade the camp. They stopped on the summit of the ridge a few moments, and then they rode carefully down the slope and moved cautiously across the plain. The Ute fires were still twinkling among the trees and the Sioux realized that they could do nothing until the camp became dark. They approached slowly, therefore, until they were as near as Sun Bird thought it wise to venture and then he ordered a halt.

"My brothers, now we are near our enemies. I will tell you what I am going to do," said Sun Bird. "I will ask my brother White Otter to go into that camp with me. I will ask my brother Sitting Eagle to go into that camp with me. I will ask my brother Little Raven to go into that camp with me. I will ask my other brothers to wait here with the ponies. I will tell you that your ears must be as sharp as the ears of the wolf. I will tell you that your minds must be as wise as the mind of the fox. I will tell you that your hearts must be as brave as the heart of the bear. Perhaps the Black Faces will hear us. Perhaps there will be a fight. When we call you, my brothers, you must come as

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fast as the deer and as strong as the buffalo. Now we will go close to the camp to wait until we can go in after the ponies. I have finished."

"I have listened to the words of Sun Bird. I have been in many war parties. Yes, I have gone into many camps to lead out ponies. Sun Bird has told the best way to do this thing. I would like to go into that camp and lead out some ponies, but I will not go. No, I will wait here. My brothers, I will ask you to remember what Sun Bird has spoken. I have finished," said Feather Dog.

His words received the silent indorsement of his companions, and it was evident that Sun Bird possessed the full confidence of his friends. As there was no opposition to his plan, therefore, the youthful war leader determined to carry it out without delay. Leaving their ponies with their comrades, the four daring scouts who intended to enter the camp hurried away on their hazardous undertaking.

"The son of Rain Crow is very brave," said Spotted Elk. "I believe he will lead out many ponies."

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"Yes, he will bring us some good horses," replied Feather Dog.

Sun Bird and his companions made their way across the plain with great caution, for the story of the Ute scouts had roused their suspicions and they feared a trap. As they drew near the camp they stopped and lay down beside one another to watch. The fires were still burning brightly, and the Sioux wondered whether the Utes had again fled under cover of the night. Then one of the twinkling lights was blotted from their sight for a few moments, and their hopes revived.

"It is good. My eyes tell me that the Black Faces are in that place. Yes, someone was moving around that fire," said Sun Bird.

"What you say is true," agreed White Otter. "But I will tell you another thing. Perhaps the Black Faces are getting ready to ride away. I am thinking about that time at the water-hole."

"You are as wise as the fox," replied Sun Bird. "Yes, we will find out about this thing. Come, we must go nearer to that place."

Determined to learn what the Utes intended to do, the four scouts rose and advanced to-

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ward the camp. They moved along close together, peering anxiously into the night and listening eagerly for a warning of the sentinels who they feared might be scattered about the plain. As they advanced they noticed that one of the fires was growing dull.

"See, that fire is dying down. Yes, I believe the Black Faces will stay here," said Sitting Eagle.

"Well, I will tell you what is the best thing to do," replied Sun Bird. "I will ask you, my brothers, to wait here until I creep up to the camp and find out about this thing."

White Otter and Little Raven instantly objected. They demanded to be allowed to share his peril. Sitting Eagle, however, agreed with Sun Bird. Many thrilling experiences on the war-trail had made the older warrior indifferent not only to danger for himself, but also for others. He knew that it was the duty of a war leader to assume the most perilous rôles of the undertaking. Sitting Eagle himself had often placed his life in jeopardy while acting in that capacity, and he saw no reason to ask Sun Bird to alter his decision.

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"My young brothers, Sun Bird has spoken like a Sioux warrior. He is going to find out about those people. It is good. A war leader must do these things alone. We will wait here until he knows about this thing. I am telling you this because it is the best thing to do. I am not afraid to go to that camp alone. If my brother Sun Bird tells me to do that then I will go. It would be bad for more than one to do this thing. A war leader must do as he finds it in his heart. I have finished," said Sitting Eagle.

"White Otter, you have heard the words of a great Minneconjoux warrior. Little Raven, you must keep those words in your heart," declared Sun Bird. "It is enough. Now I am going to know about this thing."

"Well, I believe that you are doing a good thing," replied White Otter. "Yes, what Sitting Eagle says is true. I am not afraid to go into that camp alone. But I will wait here until you come back."

After Sun Bird had gone his companions waited in much suspense, ready and eager to rush to his assistance at the first hint of danger.

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However, as the time passed and they heard nothing to rouse their suspicions they believed that their comrade had approached the camp in safety. One of the fires had already disappeared, and the glow from the remaining one was growing fainter each moment. The watchers had hopes that the Utes were already slumbering.

"Listen!" cautioned White Otter. "Someone is coming."

A moment afterward Sun Bird rejoined them.

"My brothers, I will tell you that the Black Faces are sleeping. Come, we will go into the camp and lead out the ponies," said the resolute young war leader.

They followed him across the silent black plain until they were within bow-shot of the trees, and then they stopped to listen. The stillness was unbroken, and except for a few glowing embers from the smoldering fires the camp was smothered in blackness. Led by Sun Bird, the little company of scouts moved stealthily through the dark. The lodges were well separated, and the Sioux made their way between them with little likelihood of being heard.

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Once in the camp, they drew their knives and hurried toward the ponies. It took only a few moments for each daring intruder to sever the picket ropes of three ponies and lead them cautiously from the camp. White Otter led out the horse he had originally presented to Sun Bird. When they reached the plain they decided that one should remain with the captured ponies, while the others again ventured into the camp.

"My brother, Little Raven, you have done a brave thing. You have led ponies out of this camp. But you are the youngest. Yes, I will ask you to wait here with the horses. If you hear the long cry of the big gray wolf, ride away as fast as you can," said Sun Bird.

"I would like to go into that camp again, and lead out some more ponies," replied Little Raven. "But I will listen to your words."

Then his companions left him, and returned to the camp. Once again Sun Bird led the way, and White Otter and Sitting Eagle followed close behind him. They were passing noiselessly between two lodges when a pony whinnied shrilly, and the next moment several of the

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horses on the plain answered. Instantly the camp was in a commotion. Taking advantage of the first confusion, the three Sioux rushed to the horses and began to cut the picket ropes. They secured six ponies before the Utes realized what was happening. Then as the Sioux attempted to ride from the camp they found themselves surrounded by foes.

"Remember that we are Dacotahs!" cried Sun Bird, as he rode into the midst of his enemies.

White Otter rode close beside him and a bow-length back followed Sitting Eagle. Crouching low over their ponies' flanks, the determined Sioux knocked down all who attempted to bar their way, and escaped from the camp unhurt. Then they raced to Little Raven, who was waiting where they had left him.

"Come, we have escaped, but the Black Faces are close behind us!" cried Sun Bird.

Dividing the captured ponies between them, they raced across the plain to join their comrades. As they rode they raised their voices in the ringing war cry of their nation, and the war party echoed the cry and rushed to meet them.

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Realizing that the Sioux had followed and surprised them, the Utes were in a frenzy of rage. Mounting the ponies which were still in the camp, the riders raced away in pursuit of their foes, while other warriors rushed wildly about the plain attempting to round up the horses that had been turned loose to graze. However, when they heard the Sioux war cry ringing through the night they became alarmed. They began to fear that the camp had been surrounded by a large Sioux war party, and the thought made them cautious. Besides, the women and children were in a state of panic, and the bewildered Utes realized that in the event of a sudden attack it would be difficult to keep them under control. As fast as the unmounted warriors secured ponies, therefore, they rode madly about the camp, yelling and singing their war songs to intimidate any of their foes who might be lurking in the vicinity.

In the meantime the triumphant Sioux were racing across the plain with the captured ponies. They had turned abruptly toward the west and were riding in silence in the hope of throwing their pursuers from the trail.

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However, having successfully run off the horses they believed there was little to fear. They knew that the main company of Utes would be delayed some time in procuring mounts, and they felt themselves more than a match for the small company who were pursuing them. In fact several of the younger warriors were eager to turn about and engage the Utes in battle.

"No, that would be foolish," Sun Bird declared, when they suggested the plan. "We have done a good thing. We are taking back more ponies than the Black Faces ran off. Those people did not kill any of us. It is good. We will ride into our village singing. It would be bad to have our friends killed. Yes, the old men would say, 'Sun Bird is a foolish war leader; he takes ponies but he loses his friends.' No, my brothers, we have done what we set out to do. Now we will go to our people and tell them about it."

His words found instant favor with the majority of the war party. Having accomplished the object of their perilous expedition, they were eager to regain their village without loss. They saw no wisdom in waiting to risk them-

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selves in a skirmish which could add nothing to the glory of their exploit.

"Does the wolf come back to fight after it has taken the young buffalo?" demanded Sitting Eagle. "No, that would be foolish. Sun Bird has done a brave thing. A good war leader does not exchange warriors for ponies. We have a long way to go. Perhaps we will meet enemies. We must keep ourselves strong. I have finished."

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CHAPTER V

A SURPRISE

THE Sioux rode until dawn, and then they took shelter in a dense stand of willows on the bank of a shallow stream. They knew that they were far west of the Ute camp, and as they believed that they had eluded their pursuers they determined to stop and rest the ponies until dark. Then as a precaution against attack they sent scouts to the ridges to watch the plain.

The day was more than half gone when a young warrior named Short Bear brought word of a large company of horsemen approaching from the east. He said that they were a long distance off, and were riding slowly. Nevertheless the announcement caused great excitement.

"It is the Black Faces!" cried several of the war party.

"No, I believe they are different people,"

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declared Sun Bird. "Does a war party ride easy on the trail of an enemy? See, the ground is hard. You all have sharp eyes, but do you see any tracks? No, the ground tells you nothing. The wolf can follow a trail with his nose, but a warrior must use his eyes. Are the Black Faces like the wolf? No, I do not believe they can follow us. But perhaps we will meet other enemies in this place. Yes, we must know about this thing."

Short Bear and a companion were sent back to watch the unknown horsemen, and White Otter and Little Raven galloped away to find and warn the Sioux scouts. Then Sun Bird advised his followers to remain in the timber until they learned something about the plans of the strangers. He said that the latter might pass at a safe distance, and that it would be folly to venture upon the open plain until they knew that there was no other alternative.

"Yes, we must wait here until Short Bear comes back," said Sitting Eagle.

A short time afterward the scout returned. He declared that the horsemen had altered their course and were riding farther toward the

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north. Short Bear said that he did not believe the travelers would even come within sight of the Sioux hiding place. Therefore, as the day would soon be over, he advised his friends to remain where they were until darkness made it safe to resume their journey across the plain.

"Do you know about those people?" inquired Sun Bird.

Short Bear said that although he and Lean Wolf, his companion, had crawled as near as they dared on the open plain they were unable to approach sufficiently close to identify the riders. However, they felt quite sure that they were not Utes. Lean Wolf, who had remained behind to watch, believed that the horsemen were Pawnees, but Short Bear did not agree with him.

"No, my heart tells me something different. I believe those people are Kiowas," he told Sun Bird.

"Well, we must know about it, my brother," replied Sun Bird. "I will ask you to follow those people until they camp. Then you must come back and tell us about it."

Short Bear was scarcely out of sight when

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another scout rode in from the north. He, too, had discovered the horsemen. He had also seen Lean Wolf following cautiously on their trail, and after making sure that the scout was one of his own people he had set out to warn his companions. This warrior had seen nothing of White Otter and Little Raven. While he was talking, however, those very riders returned. They said that they had found and warned the two remaining scouts.

"It is good," said Sun Bird. "Now we will wait here until we know where those people have stopped."

Just before dark the other scouts arrived, but Short Bear and Lean Wolf had not yet returned. The riders who had been watching to the south and west of the camp said that they had seen nothing but antelope and prairie wolves. Therefore, the Sioux waited in considerable suspense to hear what Short Bear and his companion had learned about the travelers.

Night had already fallen when the two scouts finally returned. They said that they had followed the riders until sunset, when they stopped and made camp at a water-hole some distance

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to the north. Waiting until it was dark, Short Bear left his pony with Lean Wolf, and approached sufficiently near to identify the horsemen as Kiowas. He learned furthermore that they were armed and painted for war.

"It is bad," declared Sitting Eagle. "Perhaps those people are going to steal Sioux ponies. We must hurry away from here, and go back to our village."

"Yes, that is the best thing to do," agreed Feather Dog. "The Kiowas are our enemies. If they are traveling toward our village we must get ahead of them and warn our people."

"What you say is true," declared Sun Bird. "I will tell you what it is in my mind to do. I will ask my brother Sitting Eagle, and my brother Lean Wolf to ride ahead and tell our people about this thing. We will follow with the horses."

A few moments later the two warriors who had been selected to ride ahead of the war party mounted their ponies and rode away. Their companions followed soon afterward. Sun Bird and White Otter rode together at the head of the company, and the others fol-

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lowed in single file, leading the captured ponies. They rode some distance farther toward the west and then they turned toward the north and hastened along at a brisk canter. They had not gone far, however, when they were halted by a wide stream which the spring freshets had transformed into an impassable barrier. Even the most daring among them saw at once that it would be sheer madness to attempt to swim the ponies through that raging flood. However, they soon learned that their dilemma was not as serious as it appeared, for Feather Dog and Spotted Elk both knew the stream. They declared that if they followed it toward the east they would find that it turned abruptly toward the north, and they could travel along parallel with it.

"But if we go over there perhaps we will meet the Kiowas," suggested Sun Bird.

"No, we will not go so far," replied Feather Dog. "But we must be very cautious."

They changed their route, and rode swiftly along beside the swollen stream. Short Bear declared that they were a long way west of the spot where the Kiowas had encamped. How-

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ever, the Sioux determined to take every precaution, and after they had gone some distance they stopped and sent Short Bear and Feather Dog forward to reconnoiter. They soon returned and said that a short distance farther on the stream turned toward the north. Short Bear told his companions that he had crawled to the top of a ridge to look for the Kiowa camp, but had been unable to find it. He had recognized the general contour of the plain, however, and he said he felt sure that their foes were too far away to cause concern.

Encouraged by the report of the scouts, Sun Bird gave the word to advance. The little company rode along in silence, for they were suspicious and apprehensive of an attack. They knew that if the Kiowas were on a war expedition they would be almost sure to resume their journey before daylight, and the Sioux feared they might encounter them somewhere along their route. They reached the abrupt turn in the stream, and had ridden an arrow-flight toward the north, when White Otter suddenly stopped his pony and placed his hand on Sun Bird's arm.

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"Stop!" he whispered. "My ears tell me there is danger."

The Sioux brought their ponies to a stand, and listened anxiously to learn the cause of White Otter's alarm. For some moments they heard nothing but the sullen roar of the torrent beside them, and then directly ahead of them they heard the approach of a pony. As they fitted arrows to their bows and peered eagerly into the dark the sound ceased. It was evident that the rider had stopped. They wondered if he had discovered them. Then one of the ponies snorted, and an instant later they heard the mysterious horseman galloping wildly across the plain.

The perplexed Sioux remained silent as the hoofbeats of the racing pony echoed through the night, for they were anxious to make sure which way the rider had gone. Still they realized that they could not place much confidence in such a hint, for they knew that an experienced scout would alter his course to fool them. Therefore, when the hoofbeats finally died away in the north the anxious listeners were unable to place much faith in the clew.

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"It is bad," said White Otter. "Whoever that rider is, I believe he has gone to tell his people about us. Perhaps he is a Kiowa."

"Yes, I believe he is with the war party," replied Sun Bird. "My brothers, I will tell you how the thing is in my mind. If we wait here that scout will bring his people to fight us. If we go back perhaps we will meet the Black Faces. We cannot cross this water. If we go the other way we will find the Kiowas. There is only one thing to do. Come, we will go ahead. If we find our enemies there then we must fight. I have finished."

His words received the hearty approval of his companions, and as there seemed to be no other alternative they resumed their way toward the north. They rode in pairs with the captured ponies between them. Having been discovered, they feared that an attack was unavoidable, and they prepared to make a valiant defense. While they could not be sure of the identity or whereabouts of the people who threatened them, still they believed that they were Kiowas, who were advancing from the west. The fact that the lone scout had galloped

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toward the north without attempting to conceal his flight made the Sioux suspicious. They felt quite sure that the maneuver was a clever ruse to mislead them. Hoping that the way before them was unguarded, therefore, they raced through the night at top speed.

A short distance farther on, however, they collided with a large company of horsemen who had been awaiting them at the top of a shallow ravine. As the Sioux slackened their pace to cross the gully the unknown war party rushed upon them. For a moment all was confusion, and Sun Bird saw his little force hesitating on the verge of panic. Then as he called upon them to be men they recovered themselves, and began to fight furiously.

"Stop! Stop! These people are not Kiowas. They are our brothers, the Cheyennes!" cried Feather Dog, after the skirmish had continued a few moments.

"Cheyennes, hold your arrows! We are fighting our brothers, the Sioux!" shouted a warrior of the opposing force.

Then the conflict ended as suddenly as it began, for the two war parties had quickly

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recognized each other. Fortunately no one had been killed, and beyond the loss of several ponies and the slight wounding of a Cheyenne warrior no serious damage had been done.

Once the blunder had been discovered order was soon restored, and the two forces met to offer apologies and pledge their friendship. It was then that Sun Bird and White Otter learned that the Cheyenne war party was under the leadership of an old friend, a warrior named Red Dog, whom they had saved from the Pawnees the year previous. At that time the two young Sioux had joined forces with a large Cheyenne war party, which had ultimately met defeat and disaster at the hands of a great company of Pawnees. Now as the Cheyennes came forward to see the people whom they had mistaken for Kiowas, the two lads were speedily recognized. As both had established an enviable reputation among the Cheyennes they soon found themselves surrounded by a host of enthusiastic admirers.

"My brothers, this thing has made clouds in my heart," Red Dog assured the Sioux, in their

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own dialect. "We have done a foolish thing, but I do not believe your hearts are black against us. No, we have not killed any of your people. It is good. If we have killed some of your ponies we will give you others. You have not killed any of my people. It is good. The Great Mystery does not wish brothers to kill each other. But I see that you have wounded my brother Running Buffalo. Well, I will tell you that the sting of an arrow is nothing to a Cheyenne warrior. My brothers, our hearts are peaceful toward you."

"I have listened to the words of my brother, Red Dog," replied Sun Bird. "Yes, you have done a foolish thing, but we have wiped it out of our minds. It is true that the Cheyennes are our brothers. We have smoked the peace pipe together. It is good that the Great Mystery put the great black robe between us so that our arrows went past. I see that there is some blood on the arm of Running Buffalo, and my heart is heavy with shame. I do not know what arrow did that. But I will tell you that I am the war leader, and I will ask Running Buffalo to draw his knife and take some blood from

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my arm. Yes, then the thing will be wiped out of our hearts. I have finished."

There were few of the Cheyennes who understood the Sioux tongue, but Red Dog translated Sun Bird's words, and it was apparent that the listeners were much impressed. When he had finished there were many signs of approval. Then all eyes turned upon Running Buffalo. The latter advanced to meet Sun Bird, speaking earnestly in the Cheyenne dialect, which Red Dog translated into Sioux.

"Running Buffalo says that he has listened to the words of his brother, Sun Bird," said Red Dog. "He says that they have taken the sting from his arm. He says that his heart is peaceful toward his brothers, the Sioux. He says that Sun Bird's words must be carried out, so that the thing will be forgotten."

Then Running Buffalo drew his knife, and turned to Sun Bird. The young Sioux smiled and offered his arm. The Cheyenne pricked the flesh just enough to draw blood. Then they clasped hands.

"It is good; now the thing is forgotten between us," said Sun Bird.

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"Yes, Running Buffalo says that he has wiped it from his heart," declared Red Dog.

After this formal ceremony had been completed the two war parties gathered in council. As the Cheyenne war leader dismounted to talk the Sioux saw that he was badly crippled in both legs. He walked with considerable difficulty, and once off his horse seemed quite helpless. White Otter told his companions that Red Dog had been desperately wounded the year previous, when in a fierce encounter with a roving band of Pawnees he had been pinned beneath his dying pony and left for dead. Some time later White Otter and Sun Bird, who had witnessed the battle from a distant ridge, visited the battlefield to learn the identity of the combatants. They discovered the wounded Cheyenne hiding in a clump of sage. After convincing him that they were friends, they carried him to a stream and attended him until his people returned with reënforcements under cover of the night.

"That is why Red Dog has the legs of an old man," said White Otter.

Red Dog told the Sioux that he and his war-

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riors had left the Cheyenne village to intercept a large war party of Kiowas, who were advancing to attack the Cheyenne camp. He said that when scouts brought word of the intended attack, the Cheyennes had decided to organize a war party and advance across the plain to surprise their foes. Red Dog said that one of the scouts had discovered a dust-cloud along the stream late in the day, and believing that their enemies were advancing along the water, the Cheyennes followed the stream in the hope of surprising the Kiowas under cover of the dark. When the lone scout reconnoitering in advance of the war party collided with the Sioux he believed that he had found the enemy, and raced back to warn his companions. The war party determined to attack their foes at the ravine, and it was thus that the blunder had occurred. Red Dog declared that several other scouts were riding farther to the east, and he believed that they would soon bring word of the Kiowas.

"I will tell you about those people," said Sun Bird, when the Cheyenne had finished speaking.

"Have you seen them?" Red Dog inquired, eagerly.

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"No, I have not seen them. But I will ask my brother, Short Bear, to tell you about it," replied Sun Bird.

Short Bear told how he had discovered the Kiowa war party, and how he and Lean Wolf had trailed them until they camped at the water-hole. When Red Dog translated the talk to his companions they became greatly excited, and were eager for Short Bear to lead them to the camp of their enemies. While they were talking, however, two of the Cheyenne scouts returned and said that they had found the Kiowas. They said that the latter were still at the water-hole, and that by riding fast it would be possible to reach the camp-site and make an attack before daylight.

When the Sioux learned that the Cheyennes were going to fight the Kiowas, they held a council among themselves, and most of them wished to enlist in the war party. Sun Bird at first talked against it, but when he found White Otter and several of his closest friends determined to go, he yielded.

"My brothers, a good war leader must always listen to the words of his friends. You

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say that you will go to fight the Kiowas. You say that those people have many good ponies. You say that the Kiowas are our enemies. You say that the Cheyennes are our brothers. You say that a Dacotah must help his brother, and fight his enemy. Well, I will tell you that those words are true. But we have taken some good ponies from the Black Faces. Yes, we have done what we set out to do. I did not ask you to come out to fight the Kiowas. I am not going to fight those people. No, I am going on with these ponies. I will show my people that we have done what we set out to do. It is enough. If any of you go to fight the Kiowas I will tell you that I have nothing to do with it. I have brought you through what we set out to do. Now if you get killed I have nothing to do with it. My brothers, I will ask some of you to help me take the ponies to the village. I have finished."

When Sun Bird had finished speaking all but five of his companions agreed to abandon the idea of fighting the Kiowas. Those who persisted in their determination to go with the war party were White Otter, Little Raven,

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Short Bear, Feather Dog and Spotted Elk and Sun Bird said nothing further to deter them.

"My brother, it is in my heart to do this thing, and I must go," said White Otter. "I believe we will bring back some fast ponies."

"You are very brave, and I will not ask you to hold back," replied Sun Bird. "I will go to my people, and tell them that a great warrior is coming to see them."

The Cheyennes were already mounting their ponies, and when Red Dog learned that five of the Sioux had decided to join his company he was overjoyed. He knew that White Otter was looked upon as a great warrior, and he believed that the presence of the young Sioux would stimulate the Cheyennes to deeds of great valor. When he told his followers that White Otter and four of his companions were going to fight the Kiowas, the Cheyennes greeted the announcement with shouts of approval.

"My brothers, the Sioux have brave hearts," said Red Dog. "It is good that you are going with us to fight the Kiowas. Yes, we will count many coups, and bring back some good ponies."

Both war parties were mounted and ready to

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depart. Before riding away, however, Sun Bird called Little Raven and White Otter to his side.

"My brothers, you are going to fight our enemies, the Kiowas. It is good. I believe you will bring back some ponies. White Otter, you are a great warrior. The song of the arrow is sweet to your ears. Little Raven, you are very young, but you are brave. You have taken some ponies, but you have never fought in a great battle. I will tell you to keep close to White Otter, and do what he tells you. I will ask the Great Mystery to help you. Now, my brothers, I will take you by the hand. Then I will go to the village to wait for you," said Sun Bird.

"I will keep your words in my heart," declared Little Raven.

Then White Otter and Little Raven rode away toward the east in pursuit of the Cheyennes who had already departed, and a few moments afterward Sun Bird and his companions resumed their journey toward the north.

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CHAPTER VI

A FIGHT IN THE DARK

WHEN White Otter and Little Raven overtook the Cheyennes they found their three companions riding with Red Dog at the head of the war party. It was an unusual honor, and the Sioux were much impressed. The Cheyenne scouts had gone on in advance, and Short Bear was acting as guide. He told Red Dog that his force was superior to the Kiowas, and assured him that he would win an easy victory.

"Those are good words," said Red Dog. "Yes, I believe we will drive those people back to their village."

It was evident that the Cheyennes shared his confidence. They rode along in high spirits, chanting their war songs and making all sorts of boastful threats against the Kiowas. If they had any doubts about the result of the encoun-

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ter they were sufficiently experienced to conceal them.

"These people are very brave," said Little Raven.

"Yes, our brothers, the Cheyennes, know how to fight," declared White Otter.

A short distance farther on they were intercepted by one of the Cheyenne scouts. He said that the Kiowas were still at the water-hole. This news greatly pleased Red Dog and his followers. They had feared that their foes might desert the camp, and hurry forward under cover of the dark. Now it seemed that they intended remaining until daylight. It was evident, therefore, that they were sparing their ponies to have them in good condition when they attacked the Cheyenne camp.

"The Kiowas think they are doing a good thing. Well, we will fool them," laughed Red Dog.

The Cheyennes had suddenly turned serious. They had learned that they were close upon their enemies, and the thought sobered them. They knew that a war party had the ears of a fox, and they advanced in silence until the scout

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cautioned them to halt. He declared that they were within sight of the Kiowa camp, and pointed out its exact location, but they were unable to find it in the darkness.

"My brothers, you have heard the words of Standing Hawk," said Red Dog. "We are near our enemies, the Kiowas. Pretty soon we will begin to fight. But first we must surround the camp. Then we will close in, and when I make the cry of the prairie wolf we will rush upon our enemies. My brothers, I will tell you to look at these Sioux. They are very brave. I want them to tell their people about this fight. Cheyennes, I will ask you to be men."

While Red Dog was speaking another Cheyenne scout joined the war party. He said that the Kiowas were apparently sleeping, but he felt sure that the camp was surrounded by wide-awake sentinels. This was to be expected, and the announcement seemed to give the Cheyennes little concern. They knew that it was the duty of a war leader to overcome or sweep aside such barriers, and they felt confident that Red Dog would lead them to sure and speedy victory.

When the scout had finished speaking, there-

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fore, the Cheyennes gathered about Red Dog to receive final instructions for attacking the camp. As the night was well advanced he said that they must proceed without further delay. Red Dog told his followers that they must advance until they saw the little stand of timber which sheltered their foes, and then they must encircle the camp. Having done that, he ordered them to ride slowly forward until he raised the cry of the prairie wolf. "Then you must rush in, and fight," he concluded.

A few moments afterward the war party advanced cautiously in the direction of the Kiowa camp. The two scouts rode on ahead, Red Dog followed with the Sioux close behind him, and then came the gallant force of Cheyenne fighting men. All moved forward in grim silence, ready and eager to grapple with their foes. When they finally saw the little patch of timber, they stopped to listen.

"See, there is the place where our enemies are sleeping. Now we will surround them," said Red Dog.

The war party separated into two companies which filed away in opposite directions, to meet

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behind the camp and draw the fatal circle about their enemies. Red Dog remained where he was, and requested the two scouts and the little company of Sioux to attend him. The latter realized that his request was a compliment to their courage. They knew that he would lead the attack against the camp, and that they would be sure to participate in the fiercest fighting.

"I believe that Red Dog will take us into great danger," White Otter told Little Raven. "When we rush in to fight the Kiowas you must stay close by me. If you go ahead alone you may be killed."

"I will do as you tell me," replied Little Raven. "I have never fought in a great battle, but I have done other things. Yes, I have led ponies out of the Pawnee camp, and I have taken ponies from the Black Faces. Now I am going to fight the Kiowas. Well, I will tell you that I am not afraid."

Red Dog waited until he felt sure that his warriors were on every side of the camp, and then he began to advance. The Cheyenne scouts and the Sioux accompanied him. White Otter

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and Little Raven kept close together. They realized that the Cheyennes were closing the net about their foes, and they knew that the fight might begin at any moment. Then a wild yell echoed across the plain, and it was evident that some of the war party had encountered a Kiowa sentinel. Aware that further caution would be useless, Red Dog raised his voice in the dismal howl of the prairie wolf, and raced his pony toward the Kiowa camp.

A moment afterward the night reverberated with the defiant yells of the attacking Cheyennes. They rode recklessly into the Kiowa camp, and attempted to gain possession of the ponies. In spite of having been completely surprised, however, the Kiowas soon rallied and fought desperately. The little patch of timber was now the scene of a terrific conflict. The fighting was at close range, and as darkness made it difficult to distinguish between friend and foe, the wildest confusion followed. To add still further disorder, many of the Kiowa ponies pulled the picket stakes and raced madly among the excited combatants. The Sioux soon found themselves in the thick

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of the combat. They kept close together, and fought with great bravery. White Otter and Short Bear had their ponies killed beneath them, but both secured new mounts and continued the fight. Then the superior numbers of the Cheyennes began to tell, and the Kiowas were forced to give way. They had lost many of their ponies, and almost half of the warriors were fighting on foot. They fought stubbornly until they were driven from the timber, and then they scattered and fled across the plain.

"See, the Kiowas are running!" cried White Otter. "Come, we must take some ponies."

At that instant, however, several mounted warriors dashed forward and attacked the Sioux with great ferocity. In the desperate hand to hand fighting which followed Little Raven was dragged from his pony, and would surely have been killed but for the timely assistance of White Otter. Then the Sioux vanquished their foes, and captured three ponies. They had escaped unharmed, and as they heard the Cheyennes whooping excitedly on the plain they galloped from the timber to join them.

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"Come, we have chased away the Kiowas, now we will ride around and look for ponies," said White Otter.

Once on the plain they separated, and began to look for horses. They soon learned the folly of this maneuver, however, for White Otter had barely left his companions when he was attacked by three mounted Kiowas. After a desperate running fight he finally escaped with another Kiowa pony. Similar encounters were being fought everywhere, for the crafty Kiowas had separated into small bands and were lurking in the dark to attack their foes whenever they could catch them at a disadvantage.

"It is bad," White Otter declared, as he rejoined his companions. "Yes, we must keep together. We are in great danger. The big fight is over, but perhaps we will be killed. The Kiowas are all around us. They are like the wolves, which wait in the dark to pull down the elk that goes out alone. We have helped our brothers, the Cheyennes. We have taken some ponies for ourselves. There is nothing else to do. It is foolish to wait here. Come, we will

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find Red Dog, and talk with him about this thing."

"It is the best thing to do," agreed Feather Dog.

Then they heard the call of the prairie wolf a short distance to the west of them, and they believed that Red Dog was summoning his warriors. Still they determined to act with great prudence, for it was possible that the Kiowas were attempting to decoy them into a trap. However, when the signal was repeated they determined to investigate. They had not gone an arrow-flight, when they heard a company of horsemen racing directly toward them. Scorning to avoid an encounter, the Sioux fitted arrows to their bows, and sent their war cry ringing through the night. The approaching riders stopped at the sound, and the Sioux heard the low murmur of their voices.

"Come, we will ride over there and fight these people," proposed Short Bear.

"No, we must wait until we know who they are," cautioned White Otter.

A moment afterward his caution was rewarded. They heard themselves addressed in

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their own tongue, and learned that the horsemen were their allies, the Cheyennes. The latter instantly joined them, and the Sioux saw that they were leading a number of captured ponies. The warrior who spoke the Sioux dialect assured them that the Kiowas had been decisively beaten, and were in full flight toward their village.

"It was a great fight, but I believe that some of our people were killed," he said soberly.

Then they galloped across the plain to join Red Dog. When they reached him they found the balance of the war party with many Kiowa ponies. The Cheyenne war leader was thoughtful and serious, and the Sioux believed that some of his friends had been killed in the fighting. They saw that Red Dog himself had been severely wounded, but he appeared to be unmindful of his injury. When he saw the Sioux he called them to him and complimented them upon their courage. Then he addressed his warriors.

"My brothers, we have fought our enemies, the Kiowas. Yes, we have chased them away like rabbits. We have taken many ponies. Now

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our village is safe. The old men and the women and children can sleep without fear. But my heart is filled with clouds because some of our people have been killed. We will wait here until it is light, and then we will go and tell our people about this fight. I have finished."

When Red Dog had ceased speaking a warrior called out the names of four Cheyennes who had lost their lives in the encounter, and then their friends rose and rendered glowing tribute to their memory. Among those killed was Standing Hawk, the scout, a close friend of Red Dog, and a man of prominence and influence in the tribe. A number of warriors had been more or less severely injured, but, like Red Dog, they made light of their injuries and scorned the concern and sympathy of their companions.

Having rendered the customary honors to their dead, the Cheyennes turned their attention to celebrating the victory over the Kiowas. The captured ponies were paraded in a circle, and the warriors rushed forward and counted coup upon them as they passed. Other trophies were exhibited with much pride and boasting

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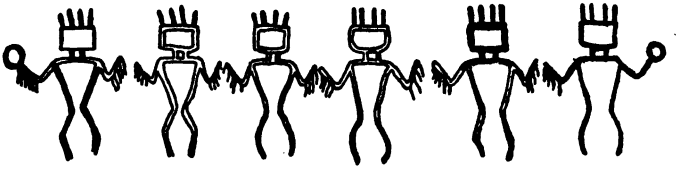
on the part of the warriors who had taken them. The Sioux, too, were invited to take a prominent part in the ceremonies. They had heard themselves complimented and praised by all the speakers, and they saw that Red Dog and his followers desired to show them every possible honor. White Otter, Short Bear and Feather Dog all made speeches in which they highly commended the Cheyennes for their bravery, and promised to tell the great chief, Curly Horse, and his people about them. The celebration finally ended with a dance. Then sentinels were posted about the camp, and the tired Cheyennes wrapped themselves in their robes to rest until daylight.



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CHAPTER VII

THE MINNECONJOUX CAMP

THE Sioux traveled with the Cheyennes until late the following day. Then, as the latter turned toward the east to reach their camp, White Otter and his companions left them and continued toward the north. Red Dog presented each of his allies with two ponies, and as they had taken a number from the Kiowas they felt very well repaid for having joined the war party.

"We have done a good thing," said Short Bear. "Yes, we will show our people some good ponies."

"Sun Bird has brought back what the Black Faces took away. Now we are bringing more ponies. Our people will talk about it a long time," declared Feather Dog.

The Sioux made their way across the plain with great caution, for they were fearful of losing their prizes to a superior force of foes.

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As a precaution, therefore, White Otter and Feather Dog proceeded some distance ahead of their companions, reconnoitering from the ridges and keeping a sharp watch for enemies. However, they saw only antelope and wolves on the plain, and deer and elk in the swales and along the base of the foothills. The third day after leaving the Cheyennes they came in sight of their destination.

"See, there are the lodges of my people," said Feather Dog, as he and White Otter stopped on the crest of a low ridge to wait for their comrades.

Some distance farther to the west the plain ended at a range of low pine-clad foothills, and within their shadows was the great Minneconjoux camp. It was located beside a wide stream that flowed down from towering snow-topped peaks still farther to the west. The young Ogalala saw many lodges, and great numbers of ponies grazing on the fertile plain near the village.

"My eyes tell me that this is a great camp," said White Otter.

"Yes, you will find many people in that vil-

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lage," Feather Dog assured him. "But see, we have been discovered."

White Otter saw that he and Feather Dog had caused a sudden stir in the Minneconjoux camp. A great crowd had gathered at the edge of the village, and seemed to be regarding them with considerable suspicion. Several horsemen were riding excitedly about the plain driving the ponies toward the camp, and it was evident that the Sioux feared an attack.

"Perhaps your people believe that we are Crow scouts," suggested White Otter.

"No, it is not so. My people have eyes like the eagle, but they are very cautious," laughed Feather Dog.

A few moments later Short Bear and his two companions rode to the top of the ridge with the captured ponies. Their appearance instantly reassured their tribesmen and threw them into an ecstasy of delight, for the riderless ponies proclaimed the success of the gallant little company who had parted from Sun Bird to join the Cheyenne expedition against the Kiowas.

Aware that they had been recognized, Feather

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Dog and his companions galloped toward the camp, shaking their weapons and yelling triumphantly. A company of warriors raced to meet them, and the plain reverberated with the shouts of the excited throng at the edge of the village. As the horsemen approached one another White Otter saw that the riders from the camp were led by Sun Bird, and his heart filled with emotion. Both companies rode at full speed until they were only several bow-lengths apart. Then they pulled their ponies to their haunches, and stopped in a choking smother of dust.

Sun Bird greeted Little Raven with much affection, and praised him for bringing ponies to the camp. Then he turned to his friend, White Otter.

"My brother, I have waited for you. Now you have come. It is good; my heart is filled with sunshine. I see that you have taken some more ponies. You are a great warrior. I have told the great chief, Curly Horse, and Rain Crow, my father, about you. They have told the people about you. Now they are waiting to see you. Come, we will ride into the vil-

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lage, and I will take you to my father's lodge," said Sun Bird.

"Sun Bird, it is true that you are my brother," replied White Otter. "Your people are the brave Minneconjoux and I am an Ogalala, but we have the same blood. Yes, we are Dacotahs. I have listened to your words, and I am glad I came here. It is bad when I am away from you. Now we are together. It is good; I can sing again. You say you have told the great chief, Curly Horse, about me. Well, I will tell him the words of my grandfather, the great chief, Wolf Robe. You say you have told the great medicine-man, Rain Crow, about me. Well, when I take his hand then I will talk about it until I am an old man. Yes, I will go to your village with a good heart. The Minneconjoux are my brothers."

As they neared the camp they heard the people singing songs of welcome and shouting their names, and they thrilled with pride. A few old men and most of the boys ran out on the plain to meet them, and count coup on the captured ponies. When they entered the village, however, they were greeted with more dignity

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by the warriors who had assembled to receive them. It was apparent that the Minneconjoux fighting men had determined to maintain a proud reserve before their famous young tribesman from the Ogalala village.

However, Sun Bird gave them little opportunity to satisfy their vanity, for he rode past them and escorted White Otter directly to the lodge of Curly Horse. They dismounted before the entrance, and the young Ogalala tied three ponies, which he had brought from the Cheyennes, to the picket-post. Then he waited outside while Sun Bird entered to announce him to the Minneconjoux war chief.

"Curly Horse says that he is waiting to see his young brother," Sun Bird said, when he rejoined his friend a few moments afterward.

Then Sun Bird and White Otter entered the lodge. They saw two warriors seated opposite the entrance. One, a middle-aged man of massive physique, wore a splendid head-dress of eagle feathers, and White Otter had little difficulty in recognizing him as Curly Horse. The other, who looked somewhat older and less robust, wore a head-piece of beaver ornamented

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with the horns of a bull buffalo, while his dress and insignias proclaimed him a medicine-man. White Otter felt sure, therefore, that he was Rain Crow, the father of Sun Bird. The two lads advanced around the left side of the lodge until they finally stood before the warriors. For some moments the older men remained silent, while they peered searchingly into the face of the Ogalala. Apparently impressed with what they saw, they exchanged a few words in an undertone, and then the chief addressed Sun Bird.

"Tell him who I am," he said, curtly.

"My brother, I will tell you that you are looking at Curly Horse, the great war chief of the Minneconjoux. He has fought in many battles. He has killed many enemies. He has taken many ponies. He has given his people good words. When Curly Horse speaks you must open your ears, for he is a great man," said Sun Bird.

When the eulogy was finished Curly Horse rose and offered his hand to White Otter.

"Now you know who I am," said Curly Horse. "It is good. I have taken your hand.

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Now I will tell you what I am thinking about. First I will tell you that I am glad you have come here. I have heard about you. You are a young man, but you have done some good things. I have talked with your father, Standing Buffalo. Yes, a long time ago he came here with some young men to help us fight the Blackfeet. He was a very brave warrior. I know about your grandfather, the great chief Wolf Robe. The Minneconjoux and the Ogalalas are brothers. Our lodges are always open to our brothers. Perhaps you will stay here a long time. Then I will talk to you again. Now I am going to tell you about this great man who is standing beside me. He is Rain Crow. He is a great medicine-person. He has done some great things. Some time I will tell you about it. I have finished."

"I have listened to the words of a great chief," replied White Otter. "I have taken the hand of Curly Horse. I have painted these things on my heart. You say that the Ogalalas are your brothers. It is true. Now I will tell you the words of the great chief, Wolf Robe. He said, 'The Minneconjoux are our brothers.

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Curly Horse, their chief, is a great man. You will see many brave warriors in that camp. Sun Bird and Little Raven are your friends. They will tell their people about you. Go, and tell the Minneconjoux that Wolf Robe is thinking about them.' I have brought you these words. You say that you have talked with my father. Then you have seen a man. But I must tell you that he has gone on the Long Trail. Now I will talk to that great man beside you. Rain Crow, you are a great medicine-person. My people know about you. You are the father of my brother Sun Bird, and my brother Little Raven. I will call you my father. Now I have taken your hand. Well, I will tell about it a long time. Now I will tell you something else. I have tied three ponies out there for Curly Horse. Well, I took some more ponies from your enemies, the Black Faces. One of those ponies belongs to my brother, Sun Bird. But I will give three other ponies to my father, Rain Crow. This is how it is in my heart to do. I have finished."

"My son, you talk like a man," said Rain Crow. "It is good that you have called me

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your father. Yes, Sun Bird has told me about you. I know that you are as cautious as the fox, and as brave as the bear. It is enough. You will be a great war chief, like your grandfather. I am glad you have come here. Perhaps you will stay many days. It is good. I may tell you some great things. I have spoken."

A few moments afterward the lads left the lodge. They found a crowd gathered to see them. As they appeared the people ceased talking, and the warriors came forward to greet White Otter. They welcomed him with great warmth, and several of the principal men of the tribe announced feasts in his honor.

"My brothers, I see that you are great warriors," replied White Otter. "I have heard my people talk about you. Now I have taken your hands. You have told me something good. You have called me your brother. Yes, it is true. It is a good thing I came here. Now I see what kind of people you are. I know I will have plenty to eat here. I know I will have a good place in my brother's lodge. I know I will hear some good talks. When I go

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away from here I will tell my people about it. But perhaps I will stay here many days. My brothers, my heart is peaceful toward you."

Then Sun Bird took him to Rain Crow's lodge. It was located in about the center of the village. As it was decorated with two figures of the mysterious Thunder Bird, White Otter knew that Rain Crow had seen these things in a dream or vision. He knew the custom governing these sacred dreams, which entitled the dreamer to decorate his personal property with the symbol of his dreams. At his death the privilege was inherited by his oldest son, who might make four copies of the mysterious emblem. Unless the latter happened to see or dream the same vision, however, the privilege of using the symbol ended with his death. The young Ogalala had been taught to reverence these mysterious dreamers of visions, and he looked with superstitious awe upon the crude red emblems which announced Rain Crow's mysterious powers to the people. The medicine-man's buffalo-hide war shield was suspended from a tripod of poles beside the lodge,

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and White Otter particularly noted the two red pipes which had been painted on it.

"My brother, I see that your father is a very great man," he told Sun Bird. "He has seen the mysterious Thunder Beings. That is a wonderful thing to happen to a man. I see two pipes on his war shield. Now I know that he has led two war parties. It is a great thing to sit in his lodge. I will tell my grandfather about it."

When they entered the lodge they found Little Raven and his mother, Dancing Fawn. It was evident that the youthful warrior had been relating a vivid account of his exploits.

"My mother, I have brought you another son," said Sun Bird. "White Otter is my brother. I have told you about him. He is a great warrior. The brave Ogalalas are his people. I have lived in their lodges. Now White Otter has come to talk with his brothers. Make him welcome."

"My son, I have listened to your words. What you have told me is good. Your brother, White Otter, shall be my son. He shall spread his robe in Rain Crow's lodge. I will make

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his moccasins and cook his meat," declared Dancing Fawn.

"Mother, I will keep your words in my heart," replied White Otter.

Sun Bird showed him where to spread his robe, and thus establish his place in the lodge. Then the two lads sat down beside each other to talk. Believing that they wished to be alone, Dancing Fawn and Little Raven immediately went outside. Sun Bird told White Otter that as soon as it grew dark the Minneconjoux would celebrate the triumphant return of the war party. Even while he spoke they heard criers walking about the village calling to the people to assemble at nightfall. Soon afterward the odor of smoke and the fragrance of broiling meat told the lads that the day had ended, and the women were busy with the evening meal.

"Come, we will go out and see what our mother has for us," proposed Sun Bird.

They found Dancing Fawn and several other women broiling antelope meat over the glowing embers of a cooking fire. The fire was shared by the occupants of several lodges, and while

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the women prepared the food the warriors sat together smoking and telling stories. Rain Crow was in the party, and he immediately invited the lads to join him. Similar fires were twinkling in all parts of the camp, and about each sat a little company of men and boys. The meal was the occasion for much light-hearted mirth, and the village resounded with song and laughter. The success of Sun Bird and his war party had fired the pride of the people, and they were prepared to celebrate the victory with customary enthusiasm.

"See, my people have good hearts because we have done this thing," said Sun Bird. "They will talk about it a long time. Pretty soon Curly Horse will call the warriors. Then we will sing the war songs, and dance the medicine dances."

"It is good. I will tell my people about it," replied White Otter.

Soon afterward they heard the familiar throbbing of the buffalo-hide war drums, and they knew it was the signal to assemble. At the summons the people sprang to their feet and hurried to the center of the village, where they

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found Curly Horse and a number of prominent men awaiting them.

The warriors formed a circle about two great fires which blazed fiercely. Behind them stood the old men, and still farther in the background were the women and children. The war chief and prominent men of the tribe stood together outside the circle, and close by them were the musicians with their buffalo-hide drums. When all were ready to begin the ceremony Curly Horse stepped forward to deliver the customary address.

"People of the great Dacotah nation, we have come together to sing about a great thing. Our young men have returned from the war trail with many ponies. The Black Faces took some horses, but our young men went to their camp. Now we are laughing about it. Our enemies, the Kiowas, have lost some good ponies. Do you know where they are? Well, if you look around you will see them. Now I will ask my young brother, Sun Bird, to tell us how they came here," said Curly Horse.

Sun Bird advanced into the center of the circle, and gave a vivid account of his adven-

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tures. When he had finished the musicians began to beat the drums, and the warriors began to dance. They circled slowly about the fires, waving their trophies and singing boastful songs against their foes. From time to time a dancer would rush excitedly into the center of the circle and tell his part in bringing success and glory to the expedition. Each moment added to the general excitement, and the people seemd to have been roused into a nervous frenzy. The dance was continued until many of the older warriors were completely exhausted, and then it was temporarily stopped.

While the dancers rested from their strenuous efforts, White Otter was asked to speak. He told of the expedition against the Kiowas, and rendered glowing tribute to the courage of Little Raven and the other Sioux who had joined the war party. His words touched the vanity of the Minneconjoux and roused them into resuming their wild celebration. Thus the ceremonies were continued until the night was three-quarters gone, and then the people succumbed to their fatigue and retired to the lodges.

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"Well, my brother, you have seen a great thing," said Sun Bird, when he and White Otter reached Rain Crow's lodge.

"It is true. Those songs will stay in my ears a long time," replied White Otter.

"Well, you will see something else when the next sun comes," declared Sun Bird. "My people will dance the great Buffalo Dance. You will see how they do it. You will see scouts go away to watch on the ridges. And I will tell you another thing. Our brothers, the brave Uncapapas, are coming to hunt with us. You will see a great camp. Many things will happen while these people are with us. Yes, we will run races, and ride horses, and try our arrows. The Uncapapas are great warriors. They have fought in many battles. You will hear about it. All the people will sing the buffalo songs, and you will see how my father brings the buffaloes to his people."

"When I have seen all these things, then I will tell my grandfather about it," said White Otter.

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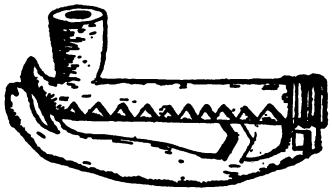

CHAPTER VIII

VISITORS FROM THE NORTH

AT dawn the three lads stole noiselessly from the lodge and raced away to the stream, lured on by the shouts and laughter of a jolly little company who were already in the water. The first plunge into the icy current from the mountains dispelled the last traces of drowsiness and sent the blood bounding through their veins. Then followed a few moments of wild frolicking, for all the boys and most of the younger men of the tribe were assembled at the stream. When they emerged from the water they chased one another about the plain until they were thoroughly dry and glowing with health. Then they ran to the camp to eat bountifully of the food which the women were already preparing.

At sunrise the warriors who had been selected to dance in the Buffalo Dance walked to the

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center of the village. Each of the dancers wore the skin of a bull buffalo, including the head and horns, and about his ankles were tied tufts of buffalo hair. Their faces and bodies were streaked and spotted with clay of various colors, and fastened to their backs were small bundles of willow branches. They carried their hunting weapons, and small rawhide rattles filled with pebbles.

While the dancers were assembling, a number of scouts mounted their ponies and galloped away to watch from the ridges about the camp. At the same time Rain Crow made his way out on the plain with the sacred medicine-pipe, and seated himself beside a painted buffalo skull to smoke and petition the Great Mystery to send the great herds of buffaloes near the Minneconjoux camp.

The beating of the war drums drew the people to the spot selected for the ceremony, and when the tribe was finally assembled the dance commenced. About twenty warriors took part, and as the old men sang the sacred buffalo songs the dancers began to imitate the animals which they were supposed to represent. Keeping

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time with the drums, they moved slowly around in a circle, performing all the antics of the great beasts which they believed they were luring to their hunting grounds. Once begun, the dance might be continued for several days, unless the animals suddenly appeared and abruptly ended the ceremony. When a dancer became tired he stooped over, and one of the onlookers, who were waiting to take advantage of such an emergency, immediately pretended to drive an arrow through him. Then the exhausted dancer fell and was dragged from the circle, and the fresh recruit gladly surrendered himself to the strenuous exertions of the dance.

"That man who is throwing dirt over himself is Kicking Bull. He is a great hunter," Sun Bird told White Otter. "Once he sent his arrow right through a bull buffalo. Another time he killed three bears that were bigger than his pony. You will see him do some great things when we go out to hunt the buffaloes."

"I will keep close beside him," declared White Otter.

White Otter was thoroughly familiar with every detail of the interesting ceremony, for

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he had seen the Ogalalas dance the Buffalo Dance many times. Like all his people, he had deep reverence for these mysterious medicine-rites, and he believed implicitly in their alleged power to bring about the desired result. He had little doubt, therefore, that the combined efforts of Rain Crow and the dancers in the present ceremony, would soon bring the buffaloes within sight of the village.

"Come, now we will go and watch my father," Sun Bird proposed, after they had spent some time at the dance.

When they arrived at the edge of the village they saw Rain Crow standing rigid and immovable some distance out on the plain. He held the sacred medicine-pipe before him at arm's length.

"See, my father is pointing the pipe toward the place where we first see the buffaloes," said Sun Bird. "Now he is looking up and singing to the Great Mystery. He is making strong medicine. Pretty soon he will bring the buffaloes."

They would have liked to approach sufficiently near to hear the words of the mysterious medi-

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cine-songs, but they knew better than to make the attempt. To have intruded upon Rain Crow at that time would have broken his power, and invited the censure of the entire tribe. Therefore, they curbed their curiosity, and contented themselves with watching him from the border of the camp. They had not been there long when they were approached by a prominent member of Sun Bird's war party, who invited them to his lodge to partake of a feast which he had prepared in honor of White Otter.

"My brother, you have opened your lodge. It is good. I will go in and eat with you," said White Otter.

When the young Ogalala parted from his host some time later he was immediately invited to accept the bounteous hospitality of another admirer. Aware that a refusal would be interpreted as an insult, White Otter saw nothing to do but to accept. As the etiquette of his people required a visitor to eat heartily at each lodge to which he was invited, and as each host invariably endeavored to offer a more sumptuous repast than his neighbor, White Otter foresaw embarrassing complications ahead of him.

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By the time he had fulfilled his obligations at three of these feasts he found himself almost helpless from the effects of his enforced gluttony. Sun Bird and Little Raven were in a similar state of discomfort, for they had felt it a matter of duty to accompany their friend to each lodge to which he had been invited. As the day was but half over the situation looked serious. Having accepted the first invitations, they realized that it would be impossible to refuse those that were sure to follow. Still, they knew it would be equally impossible to consume more food, and they were aware that to attend a feast and slight the repast would be a greater insult than to stay away. They were searching their brains for a way of escape, when they were unexpectedly delivered from their awkward dilemma.

"See, Feather Dog is returning. He has something to tell about," cried Sun Bird, pointing toward a solitary horseman who was galloping toward the camp.

The cry was echoed through the village, and the people rushed from the lodges in a state of wild excitement. Some feared that he was

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bringing warning of an impending attack by the Crows, others declared that the buffaloes were in sight, and still others that the Uncapapas were approaching from the north. Determined to be prepared for an emergency, Curly Horse instantly assembled the fighting men and held himself in readiness to defend the camp. When Feather Dog finally came within shouting distance, however, he called out that a great company of Uncapapas were approaching the village. The news filled the Minneconjoux with delight, and when Feather Dog rode into the camp they crowded eagerly around him to inquire about the famous people who were coming to visit them. Then Curly Horse called the warriors in council, and made an address.

"My people, you have heard the words of Feather Dog. He has told you that our brothers, the great chief Laughing Bird and his people, are coming here. It is good. I will ask you to open your lodges to them. Pretty soon you will see Laughing Bird and some great warriors come across the plain. We will go to meet them. Feather Dog, I will ask you to go back and tell Laughing Bird that Curly Horse will

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ride out to meet him. I have finished," said the Minneconjoux war chief.

As Feather Dog raced away with a message of welcome, Curly Horse went slowly about the group of Minneconjoux fighting men selecting the warriors whom he wished to accompany him. He chose twenty-five of the most renowned men of the tribe, and ordered them to prepare themselves to meet Laughing Bird and his escort. The warriors rushed to their lodges to array themselves in all their finery, while the boys brought in their fastest ponies, which the women proceeded to decorate with feathers and strips of fur.

When the escort for Curly Horse finally assembled in the center of the village they made a striking appearance, and the people greeted them with shouts of approval. They were a splendid-looking body of men, and the eyes of the Minneconjoux chief flashed with pride as he inspected them. Then he called Rain Crow to his side, and together they led the gallant little company from the camp. As they cantered slowly across the plain, the people watching from the border of the village saw

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another company of riders appear on the summit of a ridge to the north. These horsemen watched the Minneconjoux a few minutes, and then they galloped forward to meet them.

"See, Laughing Bird and his warriors are coming to talk with our people," said Sun Bird, as he stood at the edge of the camp with White Otter. "When those people come here you will see a great man."

The two chiefs advanced with their escorts until they were less than a bow-shot apart, and then each halted his followers and rode forward alone. They met and clasped hands, and after a complimentary exchange of greetings they signaled their warriors to join them. The latter appeared to splendid advantage as they moved slowly forward in perfect alignment, each rider sitting erect and dignified on his prancing pony, with his great war bonnet of eagle feathers reaching almost to the ground behind him. They had streaked the upper part of their bodies with colored clay, and had dressed themselves in their finest ceremonial attire. Each warrior carried his coup-stick with its complement of fluttering eagle feathers

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so that all who saw him might instantly recognize him as a man of courage and valor. The two companies of fighting men stopped a short distance apart while Curly Horse and Laughing Bird addressed them. The former welcomed the Uncapapa war chief and his escort and invited the Uncapapas to make their camp beside his village. Laughing Bird accepted the invitation with proper courtesy, and immediately dispatched a courier to bring his people, who were waiting far out on the plain. Then, after all the warriors had greeted one another and exchanged the customary compliments, the entire company cantered toward the Minneconjoux camp.

"Now you will hear some good words," said Sun Bird, as he and White Otter hurried to join the warriors who had assembled before the council lodge to receive the visitors.

Laughing Bird and his warriors received a royal welcome from the Minneconjoux. Much time was consumed in making speeches and exchanging greetings, but White Otter gave little attention to the talk. He was more interested in studying these distant tribesmen

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whom he had never seen. He saw that the Uncapapa chief was a young man, tall and wiry, with an alert, fearless face which was somewhat disfigured by a great scar extending entirely across the left cheek from ear to chin. The young Ogalala believed that it was the record of some thrilling combat, and he hoped to hear the story. The warriors who accompanied Laughing Bird were superb specimens of manhood. They were slighter and considerably taller than the Minneconjoux, but they had the Dacotah characteristics, and White Otter would have recognized them as his people even before they spoke.

However, White Otter's attention was suddenly diverted by the shouts of some boys at the edge of the camp. "The Uncapapas are coming! The Uncapapas are coming!" they cried excitedly. Rushing to the border of the village, the Minneconjoux saw a great company of people advancing slowly across the plain. It was an impressive spectacle. In front were the warriors, each leading one or more ponies besides the animal he rode. Behind them came the slower pack animals, carrying the women

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and children and dragging the lodge poles, to which was lashed the property of the owners. Then followed the herd of unburdened animals in charge of a noisy company of youths and boys. The interesting cavalcade was flanked on all sides by stray companies of dogs of various sizes and colors, many of the larger animals dragging small loads behind them like the ponies.

Curly Horse sent a delegation of warriors to meet and welcome the Uncapapas, while Laughing Bird and his escort galloped along the stream to find a suitable camp-site. They selected a spot some distance below the Minneconjoux village, and a few minutes afterward it was the scene of bustling activity. The women soon had the horses unpacked and the lodge poles in place, and then the great buffalo-hide covers, each composed of from fifteen to twenty skins of the bull buffalo, were wrapped about the frame and the shelter was completed. In the meantime the older women and the children were searching through the timber for fuel, while the warriors walked about giving orders to the boys who were busy picketing the

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riding ponies, and stretching rawhide lariats between the trees to form a temporary corral for the pack animals. In spite of these various activities, however, there was little confusion, and by the time the evening shadows settled upon the plain the great Uncapapa camp was entirely in order.

At nightfall the Minneconjoux and the Uncapapas began to exchange visits, and as both camps vied with each other in the number and bounteousness of their feasts, the people had little chance to rest. In the meantime the Buffalo Dance drew fresh recruits from the Uncapapas, and the entire night was passed in ceremony and celebration. Dawn was already breaking in the east as Sun Bird and White Otter finally stole away to Rain Crow's lodge for a few winks of sleep.

The following day the scouts again rode away to watch on the ridges, and Rain Crow took the sacred pipe and went out on the plain to pray to the Great Mystery. The Buffalo Dance, too, was continued with undiminished enthusiasm. However, as but few were able to participate in the ceremony at one time, the majority of

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the people occupied themselves with less serious affairs. The people from the two camps mingled together with less evidence of reserve, and more jolly comradeship than on the previous day. The warriors met to trade ponies and boast of their exploits; the old men sat in the shade and recalled the days that had gone; the women gossiped and compared their handiwork; and the boys met on the plain to play their games. Thus the morning passed, and at midday criers went through the camps announcing the sports that had been arranged to while away the time until the buffaloes appeared. The announcement was received with shouts of enthusiasm, for there was keen rivalry between the tribes and each was eager for an opportunity to prove the superiority of its champions.

The sports began soon afterward, and were so hotly contested that the results were always in doubt until the last moment of the contest. There were foot races, and jumping contests, and games of shinny and ball, and pony races, and various competitions for the women and girls; but neither tribe was able to secure much

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of an advantage, and when these sports were finally ended the total scores were exactly even. Then came the final, and perhaps the most popular event of the day, which was known as the Arrow Game.

When White Otter heard it announced his heart began to beat excitedly. It was a favorite game of his people, and one at which he excelled. He had been forced to practice it from the time he received his first small bow and blunt wooden arrows. Now there were none in his tribe who could equal his skill, and the Ogalalas proudly acknowledged him as their champion. Therefore, as he realized that the result of this contest would give the day's victory to the tribe of the winner, he determined to enter the event on the side of the Minneconjoux.

Two teams were soon selected, and the rival contestants marched solemnly to the spot which had been set apart for the event. Sun Bird as well as White Otter had secured a place on the Minneconjoux team. The object of the contest was to see who could shoot the most arrows into the air before the first one reached the ground. It was a sport which demanded agility as well

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as skill, and only the most expert took part.

When the rival teams reached the meeting place they formed in two lines some distance apart. Then Curly Horse and Laughing Bird walked between them urging the warriors of their respective tribes to do their utmost to win the victory for their people. The words of the Minneconjoux war chief filled White Otter with enthusiasm. Having already won the championship of his own tribe, he was anxious to establish his title among the other tribes of the great Dacotah nation. Besides, he was equally eager to crown the strenuous efforts of the Minneconjoux with final victory. Therefore, as he strung his bow and took his place beside Sun Bird, he raised his eyes to the sky and offered a silent petition to the Great Mystery to aid him in securing the coveted victory.

The first warrior to try his skill was an Uncapapa, who succeeded in discharging six arrows before the first returned to earth. He was followed by the warrior at the head of the Minneconjoux line, who fumbled at the fourth arrow and scored only five. The next Uncapapa, a great, powerful fellow of striking appear-

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ance, sent eight arrows into the air and caused enthusiastic rejoicing among his tribesmen. The Minneconjoux who was his rival scored six. The following Uncapapa was so anxious to surpass his comrade that he splintered his bow and eliminated himself from the contest. Then a Minneconjoux named Little Rabbit succeeded in tying the score with eight arrows in the air at once, and his people went wild with joy. Their delight was short-lived, however, for a few moments afterward an Uncapapa discharged nine arrows in the allotted time.

"That is a great thing to do," Sun Bird told White Otter, with apparent uneasiness.

White Otter made no reply. He was at the very end of the Minneconjoux line, and he began to realize that perhaps the final result might depend upon him. The thought startled him. He watched each contestant with intense interest. More than half of the warriors on each side had already made their attempts and the honors still rested with the Uncapapas.

Then a Minneconjoux shot ten arrows from his bow before the first one struck the ground. The feat threw the entire assemblage into a

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frenzy of excitement, friend and rival alike yelling approval of his skill. It seemed that victory was about to fall to the Minneconjoux, and Curly Horse and his warriors made no attempt to conceal their delight. Their hopes were rudely shattered, however, when an Uncapapa duplicated the remarkable achievement. Once again the score was tied. As only four remained to try for each side, it looked as if the all-day struggle between the tribes was doomed to end in a deadlock.

White Otter awaited his turn with feverish impatience. If the other contestants failed to better the score he believed that he might still win for the Minneconjoux, for on two occasions he had surpassed the score of the Uncapapa. Both times he had succeeded in having eleven arrows in the air at one time. However, the young Ogalala knew that such a record was not easily duplicated. The slightest mishap would ruin his chances. He dared not hope.

A few moments later an Uncapapa sent eleven arrows into the air in the specified interval of time. The people were now beside themselves with excitement. The Uncapapas were

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yelling and waving their robes in a delirium of joy, while the crestfallen Minneconjoux were calling upon all sorts of mysterious powers to save them from defeat. But three more contestants remained to try for victory, Sun Bird and White Otter on the Minneconjoux side, and one Uncapapa.

Sun Bird felt the responsibility that was resting upon him, but he knew that he was powerless to save his people from defeat. He had never done better than eight arrows in the air at once. He determined to make a supreme effort, however, and succeeded so well that he actually bettered his record and scored nine. The Minneconjoux accepted his gallant attempt with a murmur of approval, but their hearts were filled with gloom.

The remaining Uncapapa scored only six, but his people were well satisfied with his indifferent performance, as they were now sure of their victory.

Then White Otter prepared to make his attempt. He was the target for every eye in the great assemblage as he stepped out to make the final effort for the Minneconjoux. The young

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Ogalala appeared calm and confident, but his heart was beating furiously and his blood raced through his veins. He knew that to save the Minneconjoux from defeat he must duplicate his best performance, and under the circumstances the odds all seemed against him. For a moment he lost confidence. Then he heard a mocking laugh over among the Uncapapas, and it drove the hot fighting blood to his brain. His eyes flashed a challenge along the line of Uncapapa warriors, and he slowly drew twelve arrows from his quiver and held them in his left hand. There was something in his manner that commanded respect, and the Uncapapas began to ask one another his name. They saw that this cool young warrior intended to make a determined effort to steal their victory, and the idea caused them considerable uneasiness.

"My brother, if you do this thing my people will make you a great man," Sun Bird said, in a voice trembling with eagerness.

White Otter remained silent. He had tested his bow, and was ready to fit the first arrow. Then as an expectant hush settled upon the throng of tense spectators, the lad raised his

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face toward the sky and stood a few moments with closed eyes, while he asked the aid of the Great Mystery. When he had ended his simple appeal, he crouched and raised his bow in his left hand, while he tightened the bow-string until the point of the arrow was almost even with the weapon. He held it an instant, and then he sent it whizzing toward the sky. As it soared upward his agile hands worked with a speed that actually baffled the onlookers, and caused them to cry out in admiration of his skill. The humming arrows sped from his bow in such rapid succession that it was difficult to count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, Eleven—TWELVE! soared into space before the first one returned to the ground. Then, flushed with the pride of victory, the young champion straightened and smiled triumphantly into the eyes of his friend.

Having turned what seemed like sure defeat into a glorious victory, White Otter found himself a hero among the Minneconjoux. Curly Horse was the first to greet him.

"My son, you have done a great thing," said the Minneconjoux chief. "You have filled the

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hearts of my people with the song of victory. It has been a great day, but you have done the best thing. Yes, we will have something to tell about when people come to our lodges."

Even the vanquished Uncapapas crowded eagerly forward to praise the young tribesman who had defeated them. The sting of their unexpected downfall was relieved by the pride they got from assuring themselves that none but a Dacotah could have performed such an exploit.

"My young brother, you have done the best of all. You are as quick as the panther, and as steady as the rock. You have done a good thing for our brothers, the Minneconjoux. But I will tell you that our hearts are glad about it. Yes, you are a Dacotah. It is enough. We will talk about you at the council fire," said the famous Uncapapa war chief.

Sun Bird kept his praise until they reached the seclusion of Rain Crow's lodge. Then he seized White Otter's hand and spoke with great feeling.

"My brother, you have done a great thing. You have heard many good words. What you

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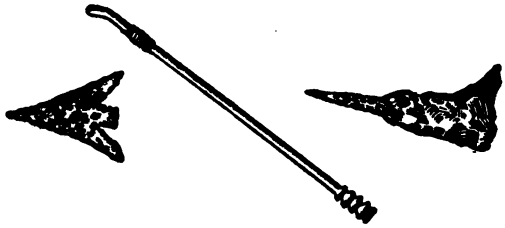
have done makes me feel like a great chief. When I think about it my heart is very big. I cannot say any more. But you know how my heart is toward you," said Sun Bird.

"Yes, I have heard many good words," replied White Otter. "But I will tell you that the words of Sun Bird, my brother, are the sweetest to my ears."



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CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT BUFFALO DRIVE

EARLY the following day the Sioux saw several of the scouts who had been sent to the ridges to watch for buffaloes racing wildly toward the Minneconjoux village. It was evident that they had news of great importance, and the people became much excited. Rain Crow was out on the plain continuing his mysterious ceremony to bring the buffaloes. As the riders passed they called to him, and he immediately rose and extended the sacred pipe toward the heavens. Then a joyous shout went up from the village, for the Minneconjoux knew that his appeal had been answered, the Great Mystery had listened to their prayers.

"The buffaloes have come! The buffaloes have come!" the scouts cried, eagerly, as they approached the lodges.

The cry was soon ringing through the camps, and all who heard it were thrown into wild

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transports of joy. Shouting and laughing, the delighted Sioux ran to make preparations for the great buffalo hunt, the most important event in their lives. The boys were sent to bring in the ponies, while the warriors hurried to the lodges to collect their weapons and decorate themselves for the occasion. The women were as busy as the men, for their task was to follow after the hunters to cut up and pack in the meat. Even the aged veterans who were too old to participate hobbled about chuckling gleefully in anticipation of the feasts which were now assured. It was indeed a time of general rejoicing, and the villages were in a noisy uproar.

The buffaloes had been discovered feeding on a vast rolling plain to the south, and the scouts declared that it would be easy to circle around behind the ridges and surround the herd.

"My people, you have heard about this thing," said Curly Horse. "The Great Mystery has listened to our words. Yes, he has taken pity on us. He has sent the buffaloes. It is good. We will have plenty to eat. We will have plenty of hides for robes and moccasins.

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Now I will tell you what to do. You must get your best ponies, and go out there and kill some meat. I have finished."

Soon afterward the Minneconjoux and the Uncapapas united in a great hunting party which included every active warrior in both tribes. It was a noble assemblage. As the great host of warriors galloped away the very earth seemed to tremble beneath the thundering hoofs of their ponies. Only the old men and the women and children were left behind. They stood together at the edge of the camps watching the imposing cavalcade until it finally passed from sight over a swell of the plain, and left a great yellow cloud of dust to roll back toward the deserted villages.

Curly Horse and Laughing Bird rode together at the head of the warriors. Far in advance of them, however, was a company of picked scouts whose duty was to locate the buffaloes and reconnoiter the country over which the hunters would advance to surround the herd. On either flank of the hunting party rode the Dog Soldiers, whose task was to maintain order and system. These warriors were men

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of courage and wisdom, whose sound judgment and impartial justice qualified them to act as the guardians of peace and discipline in their respective tribes. Their insignia of office was a raven skin which they usually wore attached to their belts. Their power was unquestioned, and at all times they commanded the respect and ready obedience of their comrades.

The Sioux cantered across the plain in high spirits. The return of the buffaloes assured them an abundance of meat for many days, and the thought filled them with enthusiasm. Light-hearted laughter, and snatches of song, made it evident that the stern Dacotah warrior had thrown off his reserve and softened his heart to enjoy the gentler excitement of the chase.

White Otter rode with Sun Bird and Little Raven. He was mounted on a fiery little buck-skin which he had captured from the Kiowas. His two companions rode the splendid hunting ponies with which he had presented them when they visited the Ogalala village the year previous. All three lads were eager and excited, for the hunt promised plenty of thrills.

The sun was some distance past the meridian

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when the Sioux finally came in sight of the buffaloes. Then the chiefs and the Dog Soldiers immediately held a council, while the hunting party waited behind a low ridge. When the plan of attack had finally been decided upon, the force was divided into three companies. Curly Horse took command of one, Laughing Bird of another, and Rain Crow of the third. The latter was told to hold his warriors behind the ridge until the chiefs and their followers had advanced along both flanks of the herd. Then at the proper signal the three companies of hunters were to charge forward and surround the buffaloes.

The young Ogalala and his two friends remained with Rain Crow. In this party were some of the most famous Minneconjoux hunters. White Otter was particularly pleased when he saw Kicking Bull, the warrior of whom Sun Bird had told him so many wonderful things.

"It is good. I see that Kicking Bull is here," said White Otter.

"If you watch him you may see something to talk about," replied Sun Bird.

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"Look, my brothers, something has happened!" cried Little Raven.

The scouts who had been looking over the crest of the ridge were gesticulating excitedly, and calling to the hunters. They said that the buffaloes had discovered Curly Horse and his warriors, and were already fleeing across the plain.

"That is bad. But come, my brothers, we must go after them," shouted Rain Crow, as he raced his pony to the top of the ridge, and the others urged their horses after him.

Then the hunt began. As Rain Crow and his companions swept over the ridge they saw the buffaloes thundering away in a stifling smother of dust, pursued on both flanks by long lines of whooping horsemen. The latter were riding furiously in an endeavor to get far enough ahead to turn the animals at the front of the herd.

"Come, we must ride fast!" cried White Otter, as he galloped away from his friends.

Sun Bird and Little Raven raced after him, with the other riders close behind them. Yelling excitedly, the Sioux urged their ponies to

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top speed, and for the moment the hunt became a mad break-neck scramble across the rocky plain. A false step on the part of a pony meant severe injury or death for itself and its rider, but the nimble little beasts kept their feet and soon overtook the clumsy animals ahead of them. Once within arrow-range, Rain Crow and his warriors began a furious attack upon the rear of the herd, while Curly Horse and Laughing Bird closed in on them from the sides.

White Otter soon found that his confidence in the pony which he had taken from the Kiowas was well placed. He had no difficulty in keeping up with the fastest animals in the company, and he believed that the buckskin had still greater speed in reserve. When the buffaloes were overtaken, the Kiowa pony quickly proved that it was familiar with every detail of the exciting sport. It seemed to know exactly which animal the rider wished to attack. Having maneuvered to a favorable position, it would run beside the doomed buffalo until the twang of the bow-string gave warning that the fatal arrow had sped to its mark; then the

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clever little beast would instantly swerve aside to avoid the death lunge of the animal it had helped to kill.

"That is a very fast pony," said Sun Bird.

"Yes, I believe it belonged to a great buffalo hunter," replied White Otter.

Then the warriors began to ride recklessly into the herd, and the three lads became separated. White Otter saw Kicking Bull, and immediately turned to follow him. The famous Minneconjoux hunter was talking to his pony and laughing with boyish glee as he drove his arrows into the helpless buffaloes. As each of his victims fell to the plain he dismounted beside it and recovered his arrow. Then he leaped upon his pony and raced after the retreating herd.

The Sioux had already killed many buffaloes, and the plain was dotted with carcasses. Some of the warriors had deserted the main hunt to run down the wounded animals that had been left behind in the wild stampede. At the same time the horsemen on both flanks, having failed in their efforts to turn the leaders, were breaking into the herd and killing as many animals as

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possible before the buffaloes ran too far from the camps.

Having followed Kicking Bull some distance into the herd, White Otter found himself in close quarters. The buffaloes had crowded so closely together that there was danger of the pony and its rider being crushed to death in the jam. It was not a new experience for the young Ogalala, however, for he had passed through a somewhat similar trial once before. Although he was fully alive to his peril, he had little fear. He believed that the Kiowa pony had learned to care for itself in just such an emergency. The thought gave him confidence, and he began to shoot his arrows at the animals behind him in the hope of opening an avenue of escape.

Then he saw Kicking Bull a short distance ahead of him. It was evident that the noted hunter was in a similar predicament, and White Otter watched anxiously to learn how he would extricate himself. He saw two huge bulls crowding the Minneconjoux pony between them, and it looked as if both horse and rider were doomed to instant destruction. For a moment

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or two the active little beast kept on its feet, and then it stumbled and disappeared beneath the great brown avalanche of frenzied buffaloes.

As the unfortunate pony went to its death, however, Kicking Bull grasped the coarse shaggy mane of the nearest bull, and succeeded in drawing himself upon its back. It was all done so quickly that White Otter could scarcely believe his eyes. However, when the daring hunter turned and shook his bow at him, the young Ogalala realized that what he saw actually had happened.

Having escaped death by the slightest margin, Kicking Bull was still in a desperate predicament. The great beast upon which he had taken temporary refuge was making frantic efforts to dislodge him, and he was in imminent danger of losing his grip and falling from its back. To make matters worse, the buffaloes on either side were crowding so closely that the bull was liable to stumble and share the fate of the missing pony.

In the meantime White Otter was making an heroic attempt to reach his tribesman. He realized that if he could ride his pony up be-

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side Kicking Bull he might be able to carry him safely from the herd. He knew that it was a desperate undertaking which might end in bringing both of them to a sudden death, but he was willing to risk his life in the attempt. Strive as he might, however, he was unable to clear a way for his pony, and as he knew that it would be fatal to kill the buffaloes directly in front of him he saw little chance of rendering aid to the unfortunate Minneconjoux. His heart filled with dismay as he realized his utter helplessness to save the famous hunter whose daring career was about to come to a tragic end.

The buffaloes were crowding closer together each moment, and White Otter suddenly realized that unless he found a way to escape from the jam he, too, was sure to suffer a similar fate. He again turned his attention to the animals behind him, and when he had opened a gap he slackened the speed of his pony, hoping that the buffaloes might run past him. It was an old trick of the Sioux hunters, and one which the young Ogalala had already used successfully. However, as he thought of abandoning

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the brave man who was still clinging to the back of the great bull, all his instincts rebelled. Although he knew that for the moment he was powerless to help him, still the loyal lad believed that the opportunity might present itself at any moment. Therefore, he determined to forfeit his own chance in the hope of saving his tribesman.

A few moments afterward the animals ahead of him separated, and White Otter forced his pony into the gap. At that instant Kicking Bull turned his head and saw that the courageous lad was attempting to help him. Fully aware of the peril, the gallant Minneconjoux waved his hand toward the rear of the herd, as a signal for White Otter to attempt to save himself by that avenue of escape. The latter shook his head, and made it plain that he was determined to remain where he was while there was a possibility of rendering aid.

Realizing that each moment of delay only lessened the chance of escape for both of them, White Otter again attempted to open a way to the Minneconjoux hunter. Laying vigorously about him with his heavy riding quirt he suc-

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ceeded in crowding several more animals from his path, and advancing considerably closer to Kicking Bull. They were now sufficiently near to call to each other, and the Minneconjoux turned his head and addressed White Otter.

"I see what you are trying to do," he said. "You are very brave. You cannot do this thing. No, if you stay here you may be killed. Perhaps I will not come out of this. But I am not afraid. See how the buffaloes crowd against my legs. Pull back your pony, and keep your life. You are a young man. I have told you the best thing to do."

"I am a Dacotah," cried White Otter. "I have closed my ears to your words. I will stay here until something happens. Perhaps I will find a way to help you."

Roused by the possibility, White Otter redoubled his efforts, and crowded forward until he was on a line with Kicking Bull. There were a number of animals between them, however, and they were so close together that it was impossible to separate them. It looked, therefore, as if his gallant attempt at rescue had been made in vain. Instead of being able to

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save his tribesman, it began to look as though White Otter was doomed to share the same tragic fate. As he peered anxiously through the blinding smother of dust he saw that he was entirely closed in, and he had slight hope of opening a path through the closely packed ranks of panic-stricken beasts that imprisoned him.

Then he heard a warning shout from Kicking Bull. A moment later the daring Minneconjoux made known his intention of reaching him over the backs of the intervening buffaloes. For a moment White Otter was dazed by the very boldness of the plan. It seemed like the wild whim of a madman, and he wondered whether Kicking Bull had actually lost his senses. As soon as he had recovered from his astonishment, therefore, White Otter called out to warn his tribesman against attempting something which he felt sure would end in certain death.

"No, it is the only thing to do," declared Kicking Bull. "I will do this thing. Now I am getting ready. You must watch me. Then you will know how to save yourself from the buffaloes. Now I am going to start."

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Before White Otter could offer further remonstrance, the Minneconjoux slung his weapons across his back and prepared to make the desperate attempt at escape. Seizing the long hair which covered the shoulders of the great bull, Kicking Bull rose to his knees. He balanced himself in that position a moment or two, while his flashing eyes studied the dusty backs of the buffaloes between him and White Otter. Then, having decided what to do, he rose to his feet, still clinging to the coarse mane of the infuriated beast beneath him. For an instant he hesitated, while he caught his balance. Then, as White Otter called a warning, the Minneconjoux relaxed his hold, and half straightened. The next instant he stepped lightly to the back of the next buffalo, steadied himself a moment, and then sprang to the one beyond, and then moved quickly from one to another until he dropped upon the animal beside White Otter. The marvelous exploit was performed so quickly, and so skillfully, that the astounded young Ogalala scarcely realized what had happened.

"Now you have seen something to tell about,"

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laughed Kicking Bull, as he threw his arm about White Otter and drew himself upon the pony.

When White Otter realized that Kicking Bull had actually reached him he was overwhelmed with joy. He felt repaid for having risked his life, and he determined to make a desperate attempt to escape from the herd. The Kiowa pony seemed unmindful of its double burden, and despite the odds against it, the young Ogalala believed that it would eventually carry them to safety. The buffaloes had run a considerable distance since the beginning of the hunt, and most of the Sioux had already abandoned the chase and turned back to claim a share of the spoils. It seemed, therefore, that the panting beasts would soon slacken their pace, and White Otter believed the safest plan would be to continue with the herd until the tired buffaloes finally slowed down sufficiently to allow the pony to escape from their midst. Kicking Bull destroyed his hope, however, by warning him that not far ahead was a rocky stretch of plain which would cause sad havoc if the buffaloes attempted to race over it. He said that many of the awkward brutes would be sure to

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fall, and the pony would be powerless to save itself from sharing their fate.

Aware that every moment was precious, the Sioux immediately attempted to open a way of escape. While Kicking Bull drove his arrows into the buffaloes directly behind them, White Otter began an attack against those that were crowding from the sides. After a few minutes of vigorous fighting they finally opened up a small gap, and before the buffaloes could close it White Otter pulled the buckskin into the opening. Then they continued to attack the animals behind them, and at last they succeeded in turning them to either side. Once started, the gap continually widened until the little buckskin was soon dropping slowly back toward the rear of the herd, while the buffaloes galloped past on either flank. When they finally escaped, the two Sioux slid from the lathery pony, and looked searchingly into each other's eyes.

"You have done the bravest thing I ever saw," said White Otter. "Now I will have something to tell my people."

"Well, I am glad you saw it. But I will tell you that you are very fearless. You brought

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me out here. That was a great thing to do. I will tell the Minneconjoux about it," declared Kicking Bull.

The buffaloes had already disappeared over a swell of the plain, and the two Sioux again mounted the buckskin and rode slowly back to join their comrades. They found the course of the hunt marked with the bodies of dead buffaloes, and at each carcass were several hunters who were busy removing the pelt and cutting out the choicest meat. Farther back they found the women and some of the old men who had followed after the hunters with the pack horses. They were already loading the meat upon the ponies and the scene was one of bustling activity. White Otter found Sun Bird and Little Raven cutting up a fat yearling cow, and he stopped to help them.

The purple twilight shadows were already settling upon the plain when the great Sioux hunting party finally set out for the camps beside the stream. The warriors returned on tired, sweat-caked ponies, but the hearts of the riders were filled with joy. They rode along singing songs of thanks to the Great Mystery

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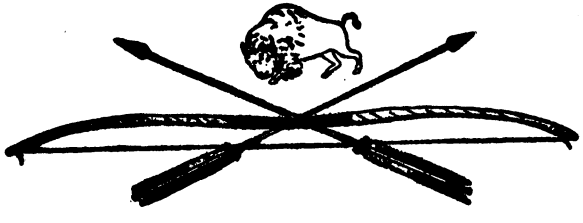
who had sent them an abundance of meat to nourish the old people and the children, and make the warriors bold and strong. Behind the hunters followed the women, leading the pack animals loaded with buffalo meat. There was a great quantity, and the Sioux attributed their success to the efforts of Rain Crow and the Buffalo Dancers, who they believed had gained the favor of the Great Mystery.

"You have been very brave; Kicking Bull has told me about it," said Sun Bird, as he and White Otter rode along together.

"Kicking Bull is a great man," replied White Otter, affectionately stroking the neck of the faithful little buckskin.



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CHAPTER X

AN ADVENTURE AMONG THE PEAKS

SEVERAL days after the great buffalo drive, White Otter and his two friends set out to explore the gigantic snow-clad peaks which showed against the sky, a day's journey to the westward. Sun Bird and Little Raven had told the Ogalala many wonderful tales about a mysterious rocky cave, whose walls were decorated with all sorts of queer drawings representing animals and birds and reptiles. These fanciful stories had aroused White Otter's curiosity, and he was anxious to see this strange place, which Little Raven solemnly declared was the abode of all sorts of uncanny monsters.

"I have never seen it, but I have heard the old men tell about it," Little Raven said, very seriously. "Yes, old Spotted Face was there a long time ago. I have heard him talk about it. He says he met some funny little people way

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back there in the darkness. He did not see them, but he saw their eyes shine and heard them squeak like ground dogs. He says they told him if he came any nearer he would be killed. Then he ran out."

"Yes, what Little Raven says is true," agreed Sun Bird. "My people know about this place. Short Bear once went far inside. Then he heard a great noise, and he ran out. I have seen this place, but I have never gone in so far."

These superstitious tales made a deep impression upon White Otter. Like all his people, he had implicit faith in the weird stories which the old men told around the fires on winter nights, and he had no doubt that the queer hobgoblins of their imaginations really existed. It was part of his life and faith. To have doubted the existence of both those good and evil spirits which his people believed were constantly interfering in their daily affairs, would have made him an object of ridicule and distrust among his tribesmen. Therefore, having had his mind filled with these simple superstitions since early infancy, White Otter saw no

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reason to doubt the stories about the rocky den on the distant snow-capped peak.

The three lads left the village soon after sunrise, and made their way to the foothills. They followed the elk trails over the low ridges, and descended into a beautiful wooded valley that extended to the base of the great peaks they wished to reach. It was watered by the stream which flowed past the Minneconjoux village, and well timbered with aspen, birch and pine. This sheltered vale fairly teemed with game, and the Sioux found themselves in a veritable "Happy Hunting Ground." They saw many elk, the cows with long-legged spotted calves beside them, and the bulls with their short, knobby velvet-covered horns of early spring; deer bounded from the thickets; wild turkeys rose from beside the stream; antelope appeared in the open parks; beavers swam about the flooded meadows; song birds filled the balmy air with melody; and far above in the azure sky a great golden eagle, the war bird of their people, soared about on motionless wings.

The Sioux traveled slowly through this wonderful valley, and at the end of the day they

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camped in the timber at the base of the mountains. Just before dark White Otter killed a yearling black-tail deer, and they immediately made a fire and broiled some of the meat. Then, as the night closed in about them, they sat in the ruddy glow of the fire, talking about the great peaks among which they intended to venture on the following day. Sun Bird had explored their grim fastnesses many times, but White Otter was a lad of the open prairie, and had only reached the mountains on one other occasion, when he unexpectedly met Sun Bird. Little Raven had never been above the foothills and pine-clad ridges.

The night passed without incident, and shortly after daylight the lads picketed their ponies in an open park half-way up the steep wooded slope, and set out to explore the snow-topped peaks that towered above them. They followed a well-marked game trail up through the timber until they reached the desolate reaches of slide-rock. Then they climbed laboriously over the confused jumble of slabs and bowlders until they were halted by a great precipitous field of snow. Sun Bird said that the mysterious

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cave was above it, and the lads stopped and gazed thoughtfully at the rugged pinnacles of rock that rose from the treacherous white barrier like the warning fingers of some buried giant.

"Have you been up there?" White Otter asked Sun Bird.

"Yes, I have been there many times," replied Sun Bird.

"Then we will go," declared the Ogalala.

Sun Bird led the way, Little Raven followed, and White Otter brought up the rear. It was slow, difficult climbing, and to guard against accident Sun Bird continually tested the uncertain footing by thrusting his bow into the snow ahead of him. When they were half-way to the top they stopped to rest. As they stood gasping for breath they heard an ominous rumble above them, and looking up they saw a large bowlder bounding down the incline directly toward them. For an instant they seemed paralyzed with fear. Then Sun Bird called a warning, and moved carefully to one side. Little Raven and White Otter followed his example.

However, in his eagerness to escape from the

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bowlder, Little Raven threw caution to the winds, and promptly lost his footing. With a wild cry of alarm he sped down the steep descent, toward the rocks below. His dismayed companions realized that he would be dashed to death unless he checked his wild slide in time to save himself. They shouted instructions, but the terrified young Minneconjoux failed to hear them. Instinct, however, came to his aid, and, pressing with his feet and clutching with his fingers, he finally stopped himself two-thirds of the way down the slide. Then, waiting until he had regained some of his confidence, he again began the laborious climb. Warned and encouraged by his anxious comrades, he finally reached them without further mishap.

Once at the base of the massive granite peaks, the lads hurried on in the direction of the mysterious cave. As they were moving carefully along a narrow ledge, Sun Bird suddenly stopped and stooped to examine something which had attracted his attention. He saw by several indistinct marks on the rock, and several dislodged fragments of stone, that

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something had passed across the narrow trail ahead of him.

"My brothers, something has gone along here," he said, soberly.

The announcement instantly aroused the interest of his comrades. Having failed to discover a trail on the snow-field, they were at a loss to account for the evidence discovered by Sun Bird. As they stopped to study his find, they immediately began to think of the weird tales connected with the rocky den.

"We have seen no footprints. Perhaps we have found the trail of the mysterious people who live in the cave," suggested Little Raven.

"Well, perhaps it is so," replied Sun Bird. "But we will go on and find out about it."

They moved cautiously along the narrow ledge, and although they examined every foot of the rocky trail with great care they failed to discover any further clews. Then a sudden explanation flashed across White Otter's mind.

"My brothers, I have been thinking about that thing," he said. "I will tell you about it. Perhaps the great war bird made those marks.

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See, he is flying up there above us. I believe his lodge is near this place."

"Yes, that is true," replied Sun Bird. "But we have not seen the thing. What we see we know about. Perhaps you have told how it happened. I do not know about it."

"No, I do not believe it is that way," declared Little Raven. "I believe that some of the mysterious Thunder People went along there."

A few moments afterward they came to a wider shelf of rock, and Sun Bird stopped and pointed to a large cavern, which he declared was the mysterious cave. They stood and gazed upon it for some time, and then Sun Bird led them toward the entrance. When they reached it they found that it apparently extended some distance into the granite cap of the mountain. The smooth rock sides were decorated as described by Sun Bird. White Otter saw all sorts of queer emblems and crude imitations of animals, birds and reptiles. These mysterious picture-writings appeared to have been chiseled into the rough granite, and some of them were apparently very old, as they were dim and scarcely discernible. The lads exam-

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ined them with eager interest, for they had little doubt that they had been made by the wonderful beings who were believed to dwell upon the bleak, inhospitable peaks of these great mountains. Sun Bird declared that his people had no knowledge of their origin, but he said that his father had often told him that he understood their meaning.

"Perhaps he will tell us about it," suggested White Otter.

"No, that would break his medicine," Sun Bird assured him. "It is bad to tell such things. My father is a great medicine-person. That is why he knows those things. But he will not talk about it."

After they had spent some time studying these baffling decorations, the lads advanced a little farther into the cavern. They moved very cautiously, peering expectantly ahead of them, and straining their ears to catch some of the strange noises which they had heard described. At first they were able to stand upright, but after going a short distance they found the dimensions of the cave shrinking, and they were compelled to crouch to avoid striking their

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heads on the rocky roof. Sun Bird said that he had never penetrated farther than that point, and he showed no inclination to continue.

"If we stay here and listen, perhaps we will hear something," he said, somewhat uneasily.

They squatted down close together, and waited in considerable suspense to hear some strange sound from the interior of the cave. Ahead of them all was dark, and still and mysterious. Behind them they still saw the light of day streaming in at the mouth of the cave, and weakening as it followed the rocky passageway until it faded to a dim, misty twilight at the spot where they had stopped. When they had waited some time without hearing anything, White Otter proposed that they should proceed to explore the black recesses beyond them.

"No, my heart tells me that it would be a bad thing to do," declared Sun Bird. "I have never gone beyond this place. Back there in that black place are the Evil People. Yes, I have heard my father tell about them. If you go back there, I believe something will happen to you."

"Well, now I know how you feel about this

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thing," said White Otter. "You must do as you find it in your heart. But, my brother, I must tell you that I am going back there. Yes, it is in my heart to do this thing. Perhaps if I hear something I will run out. But I am going to start in there. Perhaps I will meet those Evil People. I believe that this is a very mysterious place, but I am going to find out something. Now I am going ahead. My brother, Little Raven, how do you feel about this thing?"

"I believe that you are very brave, but it is a foolish thing to do," replied Little Raven. "You do not know about this place. I have heard some very brave warriors tell about it. If you go in there, I believe that you will surely come to harm. No, I will not go any farther."

"Well, my brothers, I must do what it is in my heart to do," declared White Otter, as he prepared to advance into the black depths of the cave.

Aware that it would be useless to attempt to dissuade him, Sun Bird and Little Raven remained silent. Their hearts filled with gloomy misgivings, however, as White Otter drew several arrows from his quiver, and crawled slowly

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forward into the dark, forbidding interior of the cavern. When he had disappeared from their sight they sat in glum silence, listening fearfully for some sound which might warn them of the fate of their comrade. When they heard nothing their fears increased, and Sun Bird called softly into the darkness. Then they waited in nervous suspense as the moments passed and their eager inquiry went unanswered. Tortured by a multitude of alarming possibilities, Sun Bird again sent an anxious inquiry into the black depths of the cavern. This time they received a short, indistinct reply. It assured them that for the moment their comrade was safe, and their hearts bounded with joy.

"White Otter is very brave to do this thing," declared Little Raven.

"Yes, he is very fearless, but it is a bad thing to do," replied Sun Bird. "Perhaps he will make the Evil People mad. Then they may bring trouble to our people."

In the meantime the young Ogalala was advancing cautiously into the unexplored depths of the cavern. As he continued he found that

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the cave shrunk greatly in height, while it lost little in width. Therefore, although he was compelled to crawl painfully along on his hands and knees, he still had plenty of room if he cared to turn around. White Otter found himself in a smother of darkness, which made it impossible to see a bow-length before him. As his eyes were of little avail, he depended upon his ears to warn him of peril. Keeping in mind the tales which he had heard from Sun Bird and Little Raven, he moved forward very slowly, stopping after every short advance to listen for the strange noises which he expected to hear at any moment.

Then from somewhere in the impenetrable blackness came a peculiar whimpering cry that sent a thrill through him, and made his heart beat wildly. After waiting some moments in trying suspense he again heard the uncanny sound, and located it some distance ahead of him. For some time White Otter was undecided just what to do. His first impulse was to turn about, and retreat from the weird place into which he had so rashly ventured. Then curiosity overcame fear, and he determined to

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at least have a look at these unknown demons that created such fear among the superstitious Minneconjoux. He recalled that whoever claimed to have ventured into the depths of the cave had escaped unhurt, and old Spotted Face even declared that he had actually seen the eyes of these mysterious creatures before he was warned to retreat from their stronghold. Therefore, White Otter believed that he, too, would be equally fortunate, and he decided to hold his ground and await further developments.

Convinced that whatever threatened him was still in front, White Otter peered anxiously forward into the darkness. The sounds had ceased, however, and he wondered whether he had been discovered. Fitting an arrow to his bow, he waited to be attacked. Then, as nothing came to disturb him, he became bolder. Determined to learn what had made the strange noise, he again crawled forward to investigate.

White Otter had not gone a bow-length when the same strange whimpering cry brought him to a stop. Then, as he listened to hear it repeated, another sound reached his ears. It was

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a low rumbling growl, and the young Ogalala immediately read defiance in the tone. At first he failed to recognize it, and all sorts of superstitious fears crowded into his mind. He wondered if he had actually invaded the home of some great Thunder Being. His confidence weakened at the thought, for he knew that the bravest warrior could not survive an encounter with one of those terrific monsters. Then he again heard the angry challenge, and at once it became familiar. A few moments later he saw two spots of greenish light shining in the darkness, and he realized that he was confronted by one of the great mountain cats. Once before he had fought a fierce encounter with one of these savage creatures, and he knew what to expect. However, he was greatly relieved to know that he was threatened by an adversary that was without magic power to turn aside his arrows, as the mysterious Thunder Beings were said to do.

Realizing that this fierce beast had its den somewhere in the back of the cavern, the young Ogalala believed that the strange noises had been made by the kittens of the great cat. He

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felt sure, therefore, that the latter would attack him with great fury, and he determined to kill it before it came sufficiently near to spring at him.

In the meantime the weird glowing eyes had disappeared, and White Otter wondered what had happened. He wondered whether the snarling brute had slunk farther back into the cave. Then a more alarming possibility entered his mind—perhaps the great cat was attempting to slink past him to make an attack from the rear. He looked anxiously on both sides of him, but saw nothing. Then he heard the whimpering cries ahead of him. Holding his arrow ready for instant use, he peered expectantly forward into the blackness. In a few moments he caught a flash of the blazing eyes; they were considerably nearer. However, they disappeared before he could release his arrow. Long, anxious moments passed before he again saw the glowing signals. Then, as he aimed his arrow, a defiant, deep-throated growl warned him that the fearless creature was about to attack him. Aware that a moment's hesitation might prove fatal, White Ot-

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ter released his bow-string and sent his arrow at the tempting target.

The next instant the cave echoed with the piercing scream of the dying lioness, and Sun Bird and Little Raven looked at each other in wild alarm. For an instant they hesitated, as a confused babel of sound came from the black interior of the cavern. Then, as they realized that something was happening to their comrade, they overcame their fears and determined to go to his aid.

"Something has happened to White Otter!" cried Sun Bird. "Perhaps he has met the Evil People. I am going in there to help him. If I do not come out, you must tell our people about it. Now I am going."

"Well, I am going with you," declared Little Raven. "I am afraid of those Evil People, but I will go in there to die with you. You are my brother; White Otter is my friend. It is enough."

The excited lads hurried back into the cave, calling nervously to White Otter. However, their frantic appeals were drowned by the fierce bedlam of sound ahead of them. Screams,

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snarls and choking sobs were echoed along the rocky passageway, and it really seemed that the mysterious black cavern was indeed the abode of all the demons with which the vivid imaginations of the Minneconjoux had peopled it. Still the loyal lads continued to advance. They had little doubt that they were going to some horrible death, but they were unwilling to save themselves by abandoning their friend.

Then the sounds ceased as suddenly as they had begun, and Sun Bird and Little Raven stopped in bewilderment. For a moment the unexpected stillness was even more alarming than the wild outburst that had preceded it. A sickening fear gripped their hearts. They believed that White Otter had met some terrible fate. As they lay one behind the other in the low black passageway, they felt that the last ray of hope had fled. They would not retreat, and yet they had little doubt that to continue meant death.

"We must go on," Sun Bird declared, resolutely.

"I will follow you, my brother," Little Raven said, quietly.

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As they crawled slowly forward, Sun Bird again called the name of the Ogalala. The next instant he heard his friend's voice from the blackness directly ahead of him.

"Ho, my brother, you have come to see about this thing," cried White Otter. "Well, I will tell you that I have had a great fight, but I am alive. Yes, I will show you something."

"Have you met the Evil People?" Little Raven asked, excitedly.

"Ho, Little Raven, you are very brave to come in here. No, I have not seen those mysterious people. But I have killed a very fierce animal," replied White Otter.

When his companions crawled to him, he told them how he had killed the lioness. He said that the latter had destroyed her two kittens in her dying rage. As Sun Bird and Little Raven could not see the great beast in the impenetrable darkness, they crawled forward and passed their hands over the carcass. Then White Otter said that after killing the lioness he had crept forward to the den, which was in a rocky recess at the end of the cave. A short distance beyond the body of his victim he had

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found the mutilated bodies of the two kittens.

"Now we will pull this animal out of here," proposed the young Ogalala.

It took them a long time to drag the heavy body of the mountain lion to the mouth of the cave. Once outside, however, they each counted coup upon the carcass, and danced joyfully about the trophy. Then White Otter cut off the claws, and removed the coarse tawny pelt. He also cut out the heart, which he said they would eat at their fire, as old Yellow Horse, the Ogalala medicine-man, declared it would give the hunter the strength and courage of the great cat itself.

"Yes, it is true," declared Sun Bird. "I have heard my father say it is a good thing to do."

The day was far spent when the lads finally returned to the ponies. Realizing that they could not reach the Minneconjoux village until long after dark, they moved farther down the wooded slope, and camped at the spot where they had passed the previous night.

"I am thinking about that mysterious place up there," said Sun Bird, as they sat before

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their fire. "I have heard my people tell how the Evil People change themselves into animals. Perhaps that great mountain cat was one of those people."

"I believe it is true," Little Raven declared, impulsively. "White Otter, perhaps you have done a bad thing. Those people may find out that you have killed a great chief. Perhaps they will do something bad to our people."

"No, I do not feel that way," replied White Otter. "We cannot kill those people with our arrows. No, I am not afraid about that."

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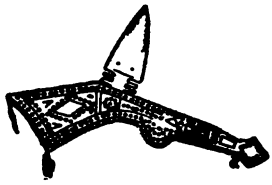

CHAPTER XI

A CALL TO WAR

LATE the next day, as the lads came within sight of the Sioux camps, they were astonished to hear the ominous booming of the war drums. As they stopped to listen they heard the people singing and shouting, and it was evident that the camps were in a wild commotion.

"My ears tell me that our people are getting ready for war," said Sun Bird. "Perhaps our enemies, the Crows, are coming to fight us."

"Well, we will go and find out about it," proposed White Otter.

They galloped toward the Minneconjoux village at top speed. When they reached the camp they found the people in an uproar. Then White Otter saw High Eagle, a warrior from his own tribe, and his heart was immediately filled with grave misgivings.

"It is bad; something has happened to my

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people," he cried, as he dismounted and ran to question the Ogalala scout.

"My brother, our enemies, the Pawnees, have come to fight us," declared High Eagle. "They are on every side of the camp. It is a great war party. They are like the grass. When Wolf Robe saw so many warriors he said: 'High Eagle, when it is dark you must crawl away and go and ask the Minneconjoux to help us.' Well, I will tell you that I got away when it was dark. Now I have told this thing to the great chief, Curly Horse. He has told his warriors about it. See, they are ready to fight. Yes, the Uncapapas are dancing. Laughing Bird, their chief, has talked to them. They will go to fight the Pawnees."

"High Eagle, your words have filled my heart with clouds," declared White Otter. "Perhaps my grandfather has been killed. Perhaps the Pawnees have captured the village. Perhaps they have killed my grandmother. Do you know about it?"

"No, I do not know about it," replied the scout. "But I will tell you that I do not feel it in my heart. I did not see the fight, but I

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believe our people drove the Pawnees away."

Somewhat reassured by High Eagle's confidence, White Otter hurried away to tell Sun Bird what he had learned. The young Minneconjoux had already heard the story from his father, and White Otter found him preparing for the war trail.

"Yes, I know about this thing," said Sun Bird. "I will go with you to fight our enemies, the Pawnees."

"You are a brave warrior, and a true friend," White Otter declared with considerable emotion.

As the Ogalala left the lodge to find Curly Horse, he met Little Raven. He saw at once that the latter, too, was preparing to join the war party.

"My brother, I have heard the words of High Eagle," said Little Raven. "The Pawnees are our enemies. Yes, the great chief, Curly Horse, and his warriors are going to help their brothers, the brave Ogalalas. And I will tell you that I have heard the Uncapapas singing their war songs. Yes, those fearless warriors are going with my people. Now I will tell you that I am

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going with my brother, White Otter. I have finished."

"You are very brave, like your brother, Sun Bird," declared White Otter, as he clasped Little Raven's hand.

When White Otter reached the center of the village, a few moments later, he found a number of warriors already engaged in the war dance. The company was composed of both Minneconjoux and Uncapapas, and his heart filled with gratitude toward the brave men who were willing to risk their lives to help his people. It was a splendid exhibition of the loyalty that existed between the various tribes of the great Dacotah nation, and it made White Otter thrill with pride. He saw High Eagle participating in the ceremony, and, as he heard the dancers calling him, he hastened to join them.

The dance was stopped, soon afterward, by the appearance of Curly Horse and Laughing Bird, accompanied by the most prominent men in both tribes. These famous warriors had been sitting in council to decide the best way to deal with the unexpected emergency, and the people

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were anxious to learn their verdict. Therefore, as they advanced slowly from the council-lodge, and took their places inside the circle of warriors, a sudden hush fell upon the camp. The drums were stilled, the songs ceased, the dancers stood quietly in their places, and the vast assemblage waited silently to hear the decision of the great war chiefs. In a few moments Curly Horse began to talk.

"People of the great Dacotah nation, you know what has happened," he said. "Our brothers, the brave Ogalalas, have asked us to help them. There is only one thing to do—we must go. But I will tell you that we must think about another thing. Our enemies, the Crows, are somewhere about. We must not leave our women and children behind us. We cannot take them on the war trail. Well, I will tell you how we must do this thing. I will lead half of the warriors to help our brothers, the Ogalalas. Rain Crow will stay behind with the other half of the warriors to guard the camp. It is the best thing to do. I have finished."

The plan of the Minneconjoux war chief met with the instant approval of his people, al-

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though the warriors immediately began to debate about who should go to fight and who should remain behind to guard the camp. As all of them were eager to meet the Pawnees, the selection of the war party threatened to be a serious problem. While they were discussing it, however, Laughing Bird began to speak, and the argument was temporarily halted.

"Men of the Uncapapas, you have heard the words of the great chief, Curly Horse," said Laughing Bird. "He has told you the best way to do this thing. Now I will ask you to listen to my words. The Minneconjoux are our brothers. They are going to fight the Pawnees. The Ogalalas are our brothers. They have asked us to help them. We are Dacotahs. Does a Dacotah stay back when his brothers go to war? No, we will go to help these brave men. I will lead our people to fight the Pawnees. But I will tell you that we must follow the advice of Curly Horse. Yes, we must leave some warriors here to guard the camp. I will tell you how to do this thing. First, I will ask Two Dogs to stay here. Yes, he will be the leader. Now I will call out the name of a war-

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rior. That man will go with me to fight the Pawnees. Then Two Dogs will call out the name of a warrior. That man will stay here with him to guard the camp. Then we will keep calling out until every one is taken. It is the only way to do. I have finished."

Thus the diplomatic Uncapapa chief quickly settled the dispute over the selection of the war parties. His plan offered no chance for argument. Everyone saw at once that it was the wisest and fairest way of arranging the matter, and there was no further discussion. The Minneconjoux accepted it as willingly as the Uncapapas, and the four leaders immediately began to select their men. It was a time of intense excitement, as the people of both camps crowded eagerly around the rival bidders to learn the names of the men they had chosen. The warriors listened with breathless interest, each hoping that he might be sufficiently fortunate to be enrolled in the war party. The men who won the honor immediately withdrew from the throng, and rushed away to get their favorite ponies, and array themselves for the war trail. Among these lucky ones were White

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Otter, Sun Bird and Little Raven. As each tribe contained a great host of fighting men, the day had ended and the evening shadows were already settling upon the plain when the last warrior was called.

Then several great fires were started in each camp, and the warriors whom fate had forced to remain behind attempted to overcome their disappointment with the strenuous exertions of the war dance. While they were thus employed their more fortunate comrades appeared in full war regalia. They looked like weird demons from another world, as they led their decorated ponies into the light, for they had blackened their faces with charcoal, and streaked and spotted their bodies with red and yellow clay. Their scalp-locks were ornamented with the feathers of the eagle, and some of the more famous warriors wore splendid war bonnets of those coveted plumes, whose trailing streamers touched the ground behind them. Each member of the war party carried his favorite weapons, his buffalo-hide war shield and his robe.

When the two forces had finally assembled,

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they united before the Uncapapa camp. Then, as the Minneconjoux were somewhat stronger in numbers, Curly Horse was chosen as the leader of the entire force. It was an honor for even one as famous as he, for the combined company numbered hundreds of warriors, each one a veteran of the war trail. They were men accustomed to hardship and indifferent to peril; men for whom death had no terrors. Their stern faces, and bold, defiant eyes proclaimed their fearlessness. As crafty and cautious as the fox, they possessed the unconquerable courage of the bear. Once aroused, they would fight to the death. Willing to sacrifice their lives for their friends, they were unforgiving and merciless to their foes. These were the men whom Curly Horse was leading to the rescue of Wolf Robe and his people.

"Dacotahs, I will only give you a few words," cried the Minneconjoux chief, as the war party was about to ride away. "You see many brave warriors. Some are Minneconjoux. Some are Uncapapas. But we all are Dacotahs. You see the great war chief, Laughing Bird. He is a great man. Well, you know what we are going

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to do. Perhaps some of these brave men will not come back. But you must not think about that. Now I will tell you that many brave men have been left here. It is good. Our hearts will be easy. Yes, we will know that the Crows will be afraid to try to get into the camp. But if those people come, then Rain Crow must send a rider to tell us about it. Then we will send some of these fearless men back to help you. I see two great leaders staying here with you. Rain Crow is a brave man. Two Dogs is a great Uncapapa leader. Now we are going away. Yes, I hear the calls of my brothers, the Ogalalas. Come, my brothers, we will go to help those brave people drive away the Pawnees."

Then the great host of fighting men raised their voices in the thrilling battlecry of their nation, and thundered away into the night. As they raced across the plain, their shouts were echoed from the camps, where their comrades were dancing, and singing the war songs, to bring success to the expedition. Once beyond hearing of the camps, however, the Sioux slackened their pace, for they had several days' jour-

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ney before them, and they were anxious to save their ponies. Most of the warriors were provided with two animals, a good horse for ordinary riding, and a fiery war pony for use in battle. After the first flurry of excitement had passed, Curly Horse called White Otter and High Eagle to ride beside him.

"My brothers, you are Ogalalas. You know about this country. I will ask you to go ahead, and see what you can find. If you want anyone to go with you, tell me about it. You must keep in sight of us. If you see the Wolf people, you must ride back here and tell us about it. Now you know what to do," said the Minneconjoux.

"I have listened to the words of Curly Horse; they are good," replied White Otter. "We will do as you say. Now I will tell you that I will ask my brother, Sun Bird, and my brother, Little Raven, to go ahead with me."

"It is good," said Curly Horse.

Then White Otter turned back to find his friends. They were riding some distance in the rear.

"Come, my brothers, we are going ahead to

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watch out for our enemies," White Otter told Sun Bird. "The great chief, Curly Horse, has told me to do this thing. I will ask you to go with me. High Eagle will go with us."

"My brother, we will go with you," replied Sun Bird.

"Yes, we will keep together," declared Little Raven.

Then the four scouts urged their ponies to a faster pace, and made their way to the front of the cavalcade. They stopped a few moments to talk with Curly Horse and Laughing Bird, and then they galloped away and disappeared into the night.

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CHAPTER XII

A NIGHT OF UNCERTAINTY

HOLLOW Bear and Little Wolf were a half day's journey south of the Ogalala camp, looking for buffaloes, when they suddenly discovered a heavy dust-cloud rising above a low ridge to the east of them. It suggested a number of alarming possibilities, and the Sioux determined to take every precaution. Riding hurriedly into a nearby ravine, they muzzled the ponies with buckskin, and then crawled cautiously to the top of the steep embankment to watch.

"It is bad," said Hollow Bear. "If that dust is raised by buffaloes, then they are running hard. Perhaps the Kiowas or the Pawnees are chasing them. We must be very cautious."

"Well, perhaps what you say is true," replied Little Wolf. "But I must tell you that I believe it is different. I believe that dust is raised by the hoofs of many ponies."

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They watched anxiously, hoping each moment to learn the answer to the riddle. Nothing appeared on the summit of the ridge, however, and as they noticed that whatever caused the dust was moving directly north, in the direction of the Ogalala village, their fears increased. They wondered if it were a hostile war party. The thought roused them to action. They knew that if the fear proved true there would not be a moment to spare. The slightest delay might bring disaster to their people. Therefore, they determined to leave their hiding place, and ride boldly to the ridge to reconnoiter.

"Come, perhaps our people are in danger; we must know about this thing," declared Hollow Bear, as he descended into the ravine for his pony.

They mounted and rode boldly out upon the plain. They knew that they were placing themselves in great peril, but concern for their people made them daring. However, the possibility that keen-eyed scouts were lying concealed on the crest of the ridge made them watchful and wary. As they neared the perilous swell of ground that concealed what they wished to see,

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they slackened their pace and approached with great caution. Then, before they finally ventured within arrow-range, they stopped and searched the ridge for evidence of hidden foes. They saw nothing to rouse their suspicions. Therefore, they determined to investigate. Aware that it would be folly for both to expose themselves, Little Wolf dismounted and hurried to the base of the ridge, while Hollow Bear remained a short distance away with the ponies.

Little Wolf crawled quickly up the grassy slope, and peered cautiously over the crest of the ridge. What he saw sent his heart into his throat. A great company of horsemen were cantering rapidly across the plain, in the direction of the distant Ogalala village. The scout instantly recognized them as Pawnees, and his sharp eyes soon told him that it was a war party. He had little doubt that these hated foes were on their way to attack the Sioux camp. The thought enraged him. For a moment he glared defiantly at the long line of distant horsemen, and his heart burned with a desire to fight. Then he realized that he had no time to waste on such futile thoughts. He knew

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that his first duty was to carry a warning to his people. The day was not yet half gone, and he felt sure that the Pawnees would make their attack against the Ogalala village that very night. Realizing that he must act at once, he withdrew behind the ridge and hurried down the slope.

"That dust is raised by many ponies," Little Wolf told his companion. "There is a great war party of Pawnees over there. I believe that they are going to fight our people. Come, my brother, we must go and tell Wolf Robe about it."

"Yes, we will go," agreed Hollow Bear. "But first I must go up there, and see this thing."

Hollow Bear left his pony with Little Wolf, and hurried to the top of the ridge. He watched only a few moments, however, and then he ran down to join his tribesmen. Little Wolf saw at once that he was greatly excited, and he wondered what he had seen.

"Come, we must go fast!" cried Hollow Bear. "Two riders are galloping toward this place."

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"Well, we will hide here, and kill them," proposed Little Wolf, as the fierce glow of hate showed in his eyes.

"No, that would be a bad thing to do," declared Hollow Bear. "If the Pawnees know that we are here, then we will not get away. Come, we will ride over there and hide in that gully until those scouts go away. Then we will go and tell our people about this thing. My brother, it is the best way to do."

"Yes, I believe it is true," agreed Little Wolf.

They leaped upon their ponies, and raced toward the ravine. Once they reached it, they again muzzled the panting beasts, and crept to the top of the embankment to watch the ridge. For some time they saw nothing, and they began to wonder whether the Pawnee scouts had changed their plans. Then Hollow Bear thought he saw something appear for an instant above the summit of the ridge.

"I believe someone is looking over that place," he told Little Wolf.

A few moments afterward they saw the suspicion verified, as a small black dot appeared

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against the sky. They knew at once that it was the head of a warrior. It remained in sight some time, and it was evident that the cautious scout was carefully reconnoitering the plain. Then he disappeared, and the Sioux wondered whether he had actually gone.

"We must be very cautious," declared Hollow Bear. "The Pawnees are as sharp as the wolf."

"Yes, we will stay here and watch until we know about this thing," replied Little Wolf.

As they waited, however, they saw the disturbing clouds of dust continually rising farther to the north, and they became uneasy and impatient. The thought of the hostile war party drawing nearer to the Ogalalas each moment, while they lingered in concealment, drove them into a frenzy. They looked anxiously toward the ridge, and wondered whether the Pawnee scout was still watching. At last they determined to run the risk rather than lose more time.

"Come, we will ride away," proposed Hollow Bear. "We are far enough from that ridge, and our ponies are fast. We will get away."

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"My brother, I believe it is the best thing to do," agreed Little Wolf.

They waited a moment longer to search the crest of the ridge with eager, straining eyes. Then, as they saw nothing of the scout, they mounted their ponies and rode from the ravine. Once on the open plain they turned toward the west, and rode away at a furious gallop. They glanced backward many times, but saw nothing to arouse their suspicions. When they finally rode over a rise of the plain, and passed from sight of the distant ridge, they felt somewhat easier.

"Now we must look back and see if anyone is following us," said Hollow Bear as he stopped his pony.

Little Wolf dismounted and crawled cautiously to the top of the slope behind them. He remained there some time, watching their back-trail. Then he hurried down to his companion.

"My eyes tell me nothing," he said.

"It is good," replied Hollow Bear. "Come, now we will ride toward our people."

Having made the wide detour toward the

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west to deceive anyone who might have been watching, the crafty Sioux now turned toward the north. They forced the ponies to a desperate pace, for they realized that they must reach the Ogalala camp without a moment of unnecessary delay. They had not gone far, however, when they saw what looked like the heads of several prairie wolves, above a rise of ground to the west. There was something about them that instantly roused the suspicions of the Ogalalas. They felt sure that the "wolves" were disguised scouts.

"It is bad," cried Hollow Bear. "Those things are not wolves. No, they are Pawnee scouts. We have been discovered. We must keep watching that place. I believe there is another big war party over there."

"Yes, I believe it is so," declared Little Wolf. "Those people are watching for their brothers. I believe that all the Pawnees are coming to fight our people. They will come up on both sides of the village. See, those scouts have gone away. I believe that they have gone to tell their people about us."

"Well, there is one over there," replied Hol-

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low Bear. "See, he is looking over that rock."

"Your eyes are like the eyes of the great war bird," said Little Wolf. "Now I see him. Yes, he is watching us."

The Sioux were much depressed by what they had seen. It was evident that a vast force of Pawnees were approaching the Ogalala village. The two scouts felt sure that their people would be greatly outnumbered, and as the Ogalala camp contained many women and children, besides the aged, they dared not think what would happen if the pitiless Pawnees once forced their way into the village. They realized that they must reach the village far enough ahead of their foes to give Wolf Robe and his warriors time to prepare for the attack. Roused by the thought, they urged their ponies to the limit of endurance. Then, as they glanced uneasily over their shoulders, they saw a small company of horsemen watching them from the ridge to the westward.

"We are too far away; they will not ride after us," declared Hollow Bear.

"Perhaps they do not know that we are Dacotahs," suggested Little Wolf.

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"They cannot see our faces, but they will say: 'See, those riders go very fast. They are running toward the camp of our enemies, the Sioux. They are scouts. If they were Kiowas they would go the other way. If they were Black-feet they would ride over this way to go around their enemies, the Sioux. The Crows do not come down so far. No, they are Sioux.' Yes, that is how the Pawnees will know about us," declared Hollow Bear with conviction.

"You are as wise as the fox," said Little Wolf.

As they looked back they saw several horsemen galloping wildly across the plain toward the east. For a moment the unexpected maneuver baffled them, and then they suddenly realized the object of it.

"Now I know about it," declared Little Wolf. "Those riders are scouts. They are going over there to look for their brothers. They will tell them about us. It is good. Perhaps the war leaders will come together to talk about it. Then our people will have time to do something."

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"I believe you have told the thing as it is," agreed Hollow Bear.

The western sky was ablaze with the glories of the sunset as they finally came in sight of the Ogalala camp. It was still some distance away, however, and the eager scouts lashed their ponies without mercy as they raced across the plain to warn their people. They believed that the Pawnees were following swiftly on their trail, with the hope of attacking the Sioux before they had an opportunity to prepare themselves.

The great Ogalala camp was the scene of peaceful tranquillity. The herds of unprotected ponies grazing on the plain, the smoke rising lazily above the lodges, the absence of sentinels from the ridges, all these things proclaimed the fancied security of the unsuspecting Ogalalas. The excited scouts groaned as they realized it. As they neared the lodges they began to shout at the top of their voices, and in a few moments the people rushed to the edge of the camp. Hollow Bear and Little Wolf pointed excitedly toward the south, and then toward the herds of ponies, at the same

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time sounding the piercing war cry of the Dacotahs.

"The Pawnees are coming! Drive in the ponies. Get ready to fight!" they cried when they came within shouting distance.

The warning instantly caused a commotion in the village. The warriors rushed for their weapons, the women dragged the frightened children to the lodges, and a company of boys ran out on the plain to drive in the horses. The war ponies, as usual, were picketed in the camp. Then, when the riders dashed into the village and told their story, a number of scouts leaped upon their ponies and raced away to watch for the Pawnees.

A few moments afterward Wolf Robe, the Ogalala war chief, called his warriors together in council. He realized at once that the situation was serious, and he was troubled and fearful of the outcome. The presence of the women and children filled his heart with gloomy misgivings, for he saw no way of getting them away. Ordinarily they would have been sent to the hills under a strong escort of warriors, but in the present emergency he knew that

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such an attempt would be almost sure to end disastrously. The nearest foothills were far away to the west, in the country of the Minneconjoux, and the experienced old chief realized that the first maneuver of his foes would be to surround the Ogalala camp. But even if the women and children were taken from the village before the way was barred, Wolf Robe knew that it would be folly to send them across the open plain under as feeble an escort as he could spare for their protection. Hollow Bear and Little Wolf both assured him that there were at least four Pawnees for every Ogalala, and Wolf Robe believed that in the face of such overwhelming odds the village itself would be the best safeguard for his people. Protected somewhat by the lodges, he believed that they might hold off their foes until help could arrive. Therefore, he determined to keep the women and children in the camp, at least until he learned the actual strength and disposition of the Pawnee forces.

"My brothers, you have heard about this thing," he told the warriors. "Our enemies, the Pawnees, are coming to fight us. But the

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sharp eyes of our scouts found them. It is good. Now we know about it. We are ready to fight. But our women and children are in this camp. We cannot get them out. No, the Pawnees are all around us. There are many warriors. We must keep them out of the village. Perhaps it will be a hard thing to do. I will ask you to be men. When it is dark I will send a scout to our brothers, the brave Minneconjoux. They will come here to help us. White Otter will come. I believe the Pawnees are doing this thing because White Otter brought the Red Arrow from their medicine-lodge. Now it is in the lodge of Yellow Horse. Now the Pawnees will try to take it away again. Well, we are Dacotahs. I will ask you to make your hearts brave against these boastful Wolf People. You have heard the words of Wolf Robe."

The Ogalalas received the speech with enthusiasm. All of the warriors were eager to fight, and, although they knew that they were greatly outnumbered, there was not one among them who had any doubt of their ability to keep the Pawnees from entering the village. Hav-

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ing endorsed the words of their chief, therefore, they were now ready to obey his commands.

Wolf Robe immediately made preparations for the battle. The ponies were driven in from the plain and picketed in the center of the village; the women and children were sent to the inside lodges; and the warriors took their places along the edge of the camp. Then the stern old war chief waited impatiently for word from his scouts. Darkness was already settling upon the plain when several riders returned to the village to report. They said that the Pawnees were divided into three great war parties, each composed of more warriors than were in the Ogalala camp. The scouts declared that the enemy had halted some distance out on the plain, but they warned Wolf Robe that the camp was entirely surrounded. They said that they had little doubt that Pawnee scouts were already creeping forward to reconnoiter the village.

"Then we must watch," replied the Ogalala war chief.

After the scouts had ridden away, Wolf

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Robe hurried around the edge of the camp, telling his warriors what he had learned. He warned them against the Pawnee scouts, and urged them to be as watchful as the fox. Then he stopped beside High Eagle, one of the most famous warriors of the tribe.

"My brother, there are a great many Pawnees out there," said Wolf Robe. "Our women and children are in the lodges. They cannot get away. The village is surrounded by the Wolf People. Perhaps there will be too many against us. I am troubled in my heart. You have done many great things. You are very brave. Now I will ask you to risk your life."

"My ears are open—I am waiting for your words," replied High Eagle, as the old chief hesitated.

"Well, I will ask you to take your best pony, and go to tell our brothers, the brave Minneconjoux, about this thing. Perhaps you will be killed. But if you get away you will do a great thing," declared Wolf Robe.

"I will go," said High Eagle. "If I get away I will give the call of the prairie wolf. But if you do not hear it, then you will know

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that I have been killed. Then you must send another scout to do this thing. Now I am going."

"You are a great warrior," declared Wolf Robe.

A few moments afterward High Eagle led his muzzled pony from the village and disappeared into the night. The people waited anxiously. It was a long time before they finally heard the dismal call of the prairie wolf, far away toward the west. Then their hearts filled with joy, and they began to shout and sing their war songs.

"It is good. High Eagle has crept past the Pawnees. Now he will bring our brothers, the Minneconjoux, to help us," declared Wolf Robe.

Then the bark of the little gray fox sounded close to the edge of the camp, and the Ogalalas knew that one of the scouts was returning. When the signal had been repeated the proper number of times, it was answered from the village. A few moments afterward Crooked Dog rode into the camp. He said that the Pawnees to the south of the village were advancing. While he was talking another signal sounded through the darkness and a scout rode in from

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the west. He, too, declared that the war party on that side of the camp was moving forward. Then the other scouts returned and gave warning that their foes were closing in on all sides of the village.

"My brothers, the Pawnees are coming to fight us!" cried Wolf Robe. "You must watch with the eyes of a fox; you must fight with the heart of a bear. Do not run out to meet them. No, that would be foolish. Keep close together, near the lodges. Then the Pawnees cannot get into the camp. Listen! I hear the great war cry of the Dacotahs. Yes, it is what I am listening for. We must drive off these boastful people until our brothers come here to help us. Then we will run out and chase the Wolf People back to their lodges. Dacotahs, I will ask you to fight like men. Now I am taking my weapons. I am going to the edge of the camp to kill many Pawnees. I have told you what to do."

Roused by the fearlessness of their aged chief, the Ogalala fighting men raised their voices in a mighty shout of defiance that rang out across the somber black plain, and carried

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an ominous warning to the ears of the advancing Pawnees. Then, having sent their challenge, they subsided into grim, silent watchfulness. Crouching close beside one another at the edge of the camp, they peered anxiously into the night, straining their ears to catch the first warning of their crafty foes.

For some time the stillness was unbroken, and the Sioux waited in trying suspense. Then the cry of the great gray wolf sounded a short distance to the west of the camp. The Dacotahs knew at once that it was a signal, and they believed the attack was about to begin. A few moments later a similar signal sounded from the south. The eyes of the Sioux flashed angrily as they listened. Then a third call came from the east.

"The Wolf People are all around us," said Wolf Robe. "When the next call sounds above the camp, then they will rush ahead and the fight will begin."

It was evident, however, that the company of warriors who were to attack the Ogalala village from the north had been longer in reaching their position, for as yet no signal had

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come from that direction. While the Sioux waited expectantly for the final signal another cry sounded from the west. It was apparent that the Pawnees were impatient at the tardiness of their comrades. Again an answer came from the east, and, a few moments afterward, another from the south. The north was still silent.

"I do not know about that thing," Wolf Robe told Yellow Horse, the medicine-man.

Before the latter could reply, however, the weird, long-drawn-out howl of the timber wolf rose in the north. Every Dacotah's heart bounded at the sound. They knew that the circle had been completed, the last gap had been closed, the camp was surrounded. The thought steadied the warriors for the fight. They realized that upon them depended the fate of their women and children, and they told one another that they must fight to the death to keep the Pawnees from the village. Then they waited calmly for their foes to appear.

It was not long before a piercing yell sounded to the west of the village, and a moment afterward it was echoed on all sides of the

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camp. Then the great horde of frenzied Pawnees charged. Instantly all was confusion. The shouts and whoops of the warriors, the hysterical screams of the terrorized women and children, the barking of the dogs, the neighing of the frightened ponies were combined in one deafening uproar that turned the besieged camp into a bedlam. Darkness added to the disorder. In spite of the tumult, however, the fearless men at the edge of the village continued calm and undismayed. They faced the furious assault without a tremor, and fought with a sullen ferocity that bewildered their foes.

Once within arrow-range of the Ogalala camp, the Pawnees thronged out of the night like a great swarm of angry bees. Realizing the importance of making their first onslaught successful, they risked themselves with foolhardy recklessness, and charged to the very border of the village. Then they found themselves face to face with a foe as determined as they, and a terrific hand to hand conflict ensued. In spite of their superior numbers, however, the Pawnees were unable to gain a foothold in the camp. The Sioux held their ground

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with a dogged stubbornness that frustrated all attempts to break through them. Partly sheltered by the lodges, they inflicted severe punishment upon their enemies, with slight loss to themselves. The Pawnees were quick to realize that the fight was going against them. The idea roused them to a frenzy of rage, and they fought like demons. Again and again they strove to break through the impenetrable circle of grim Dacotah warriors, and each time they were hurled back with heavy losses. Here and there a hostile warrior did succeed in gaining a temporary foothold at the edge of the camp, but in every case he forfeited his life to his valor. Aware that their efforts were proving futile, the Pawnees finally became demoralized, and withdrew in confusion. As they retreated into the night, their ears rang with taunts and challenges of the triumphant Ogalalas.

When the Pawnees had gone from hearing, the Sioux took account of their losses. A number of warriors had been killed, and many more had been wounded. As the names of the dead were called out great wailing and lamenting be-

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gan among the women. The more desperately wounded were carried to the center of the camp, and their places were filled by the older boys, who were delighted at the opportunity to participate in the fight.

The Sioux realized that they were in a desperate plight. They had little doubt that the Pawnees would renew the attack at dawn, and the thought suggested all sorts of alarming possibilities. In spite of their temporary success, therefore, the Ogalalas were depressed and doubtful.

"My brothers, you have made a great fight," cried Wolf Robe, as he walked along the edge of the camp. "We have kept the Wolf People out of the camp. They have carried away many dead warriors. But I must tell you that they will come again. When the light comes over there in the sky then you must watch like the fox. We must keep them off. Our brothers, the brave Minneconjoux, will come to help us. We must keep alive until they get here. It will be a hard thing to do. Perhaps it will be a long time. But I will ask you to make your hearts strong to do this thing. I have finished."

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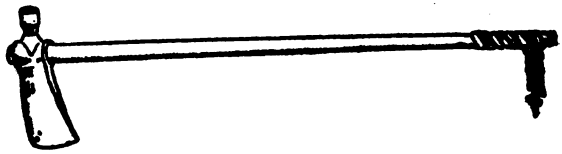

CHAPTER XIII

RACING TO THE RESCUE

AS White Otter and his companions raced through the night in advance of the war party, the troubled young Ogalala turned his eyes to the vast, star-lit heavens, and asked the Great Mystery to help his people. His mind was filled with all sorts of vague fears for the safety of the Ogalala camp, and he regretted that he was not there to share the peril with its gallant defenders. Then he suddenly realized that he might be able to render still greater aid in his present position, and he sought to comfort himself with the thought.

"My brother, I see that you feel bad in your heart," Sun Bird said soothingly.

"It is true; my heart is filled with clouds," replied White Otter. "I am thinking about my grandfather, the great chief Wolf Robe. I am thinking about my grandmother, the good Singing Wind. I am thinking about my friends.

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High Eagle has told me something bad. The Pawnees are on every side of the village. They are like the grass. It is bad. The Ogalalas are very brave, but many wolves can kill a bear. I do not know what has happened. Two suns have passed since High Eagle left that camp. We are riding fast, but another sun will pass before we come near that place. Perhaps my people have been wiped away. My brothers, I am thinking about these things. Yes, I feel bad in my heart."

White Otter's gloomy words were received in silence. His companions found nothing to say in reply. High Eagle felt quite as hopeless as his tribesman, and Sun Bird and Little Raven dared not fill the Ogalala's heart with false hopes. The four anxious scouts galloped along in silence, therefore, each hoping that his fears for the Ogalala camp would prove groundless. They rode thus until the first gray hint of daylight showed in the eastern sky, and then White Otter seemed to rally from his gloom.

"See, my brothers, the Great Mystery is wiping away the darkness," he said eagerly.

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"Pretty soon it will be gone. Then the sun will come. That makes me feel good again. Yes, I will wipe the clouds from my heart. I will be a warrior. See how the Great Mystery does this thing. I am thinking about it. When the darkness is gone, then everything is good. The birds sing. Yes, my brothers, it is a great thing to do. Well, I will wipe the darkness out of my heart. Then the sun will come there. It is good. I will sing my war songs. Yes, I will be strong to help my people. Ho, my brothers, we are Dacotahs! It is enough."

This unexpected display of cheerfulness had an instant effect upon his comrades. Stimulated by his fortitude, they, too, roused themselves from their depression and became light-hearted and hopeful. The dawn of a new day restored their confidence.

"White Otter, you have spoken brave words," said High Eagle. "Now I feel different in my heart. I believe our people will keep the Pawnees out of the camp. Pretty soon this great war party will come to that place. Then the Wolf People will run like rabbits."

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As the light strengthened they saw that they had left the war party far behind, and they realized that they had ridden desperately. However, except for their rapid breathing and lathery sides, the wiry little ponies showed no effects of the strenuous pace, and their riders felt greatly relieved. They rode to the summit of a rocky knoll and dismounted to watch the plain.

It was not long before they saw the dust from the war party rising some distance away to the west. Shortly afterward the foremost riders galloped into view. They immediately discovered the four scouts and stopped to study them. Then Sun Bird mounted his pony and rode rapidly in a circle. Assured by the maneuver, the great company of Sioux warriors thundered across the plain to join their tribesmen.

When Curly Horse and Laughing Bird learned that the scouts had seen nothing to arouse suspicion, they led the war party to a distant grove of aspens, which High Eagle said marked a water-hole. White Otter and his companions accompanied them, but as soon

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as they had refreshed themselves and their ponies at the little pool they galloped away to reconnoiter in advance of the company.

The alert scouts proceeded with more caution as the day wore on, for although they knew that they were still a long distance from the besieged camp, they feared that the Pawnees might have sent riders far out on the plain to watch for reënforcements from the Minneconjoux camp.

"Perhaps the Wolf People know about this thing; we must keep watching ahead," declared White Otter.

"Yes, if they see us it will be a bad thing," replied Sun Bird. "Then they will tell their people, and they will get away before this great war party can catch them."

"I do not believe that the Pawnees know about this thing," High Eagle said hopefully. "No, I crawled away as easy as a snake. I do not believe that the Pawnees will know about this great war party until we come to fight them."

The day passed without incident, and at sunset they came in sight of the grove where White

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Otter had encountered the Ute war party. His heart beat fast with emotion as he saw the little patch of trees, and realized that he might reach the Ogalala village before daylight. All his anxiety returned at the thought, and once more he became a prey to all sorts of doubts and fears.

"My brothers, we are getting close to my people," he said soberly. "Over there is the place where I heard the Black Faces. It is not far from the Ogalala camp. Our ponies are fresh. Perhaps we will get to that place before another sun comes. But we must be very cautious. Perhaps some of the Wolf People are hiding over there among the trees. I will ask my brother, Sun Bird, and my brother, Little Raven, to wait here behind this ridge to watch for Curly Horse and his people. Come, High Eagle, we will go over there and see if anyone is hiding in that place."

"Well, I will wait here with Little Raven," agreed Sun Bird.

Then White Otter and High Eagle mounted their ponies and rode toward the timber. As they approached it they dropped to one side

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of their mounts and advanced very cautiously. They found the grove free of enemies, and immediately signaled the news to Little Raven, who was watching from the ridge. Soon afterward the Dacotah war party galloped across the plain. The two Ogalalas thrilled with pride as they watched the great force of Sioux fighting men approach. They felt certain that they would soon vanquish the Pawnees, and their only fear was that they might be too late. They realized that three days had passed since High Eagle had crawled safely through the Pawnee lines, and they feared that the battle had been won or lost in the meantime. The latter possibility filled them with dread, for they knew that defeat meant death for most of the people in the Ogalala camp.

"If our people have been wiped away, then I will go and let the Pawnees kill me," declared White Otter.

"Well, if you do that, then I will go with you," said High Eagle.

When the war party reached the grove, the warriors dismounted from their sweating ponies and threw themselves upon the ground

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for a few moments of rest. However, Curly Horse had no intention of loitering longer than was actually necessary for the tired ponies. He knew that every moment was precious in such an emergency, and he was eager to reach the scene of the conflict as soon as possible.

"My brothers, I must tell you that we are near the place where the brave Ogalalas are fighting the Pawnees," he told his warriors. "It is true that we have come a long way. But we must not stay here. No, if we wait here the Wolf People will get into that camp and kill many of our people. Our brothers are waiting for us. They are listening to hear the war cry of the great Dacotah nation. It will make them strong to fight. I believe that we are as many as the Pawnees. We will wait here a little time so that our ponies will be fresh. Then we will go on. I have spoken."

The Sioux remained at the water-hole until the ponies had recovered from their violent exertions, and then they mounted and galloped away toward the east. The thought that they were actually nearing the besieged camp made them eager and impatient to come within strik-

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ing distance of their foes, and they raced on at a desperate pace. White Otter and his companions rode some distance in advance of the war party.

"Look!" cried Little Raven, as the four scouts raced over the summit of a low ridge.

They were dismayed to see two horsemen suddenly appear from a ravine directly ahead of them and ride furiously toward the east. They had little doubt that the unknown riders were Pawnee scouts who had been watching the advance of the Sioux war party. As they were too far away to be overtaken, there was nothing to do but report the discovery to Curly Horse.

"It is bad," said High Eagle. "Those scouts will tell their people about this great war party. Perhaps the Wolf People will rush into the camp before we get there."

"I will ride back and tell Curly Horse about this thing," cried Sun Bird.

"Yes, it is the best thing to do," replied White Otter. "We have found out something bad. But I will tell you that I believe my people have kept the Pawnees out of the camp.

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When I think about it my heart grows strong. If the Pawnees got into the village those scouts would not be watching in that ravine. I believe that the fight is still going on. Go, Sun Bird, my brother, and tell your great chief to come as fast as the wind. The Pawnees know about us. Now they will do some brave things to get into the village. We must help the brave Ogalalas. Now I am going ahead to do something."

A moment afterward the loyal lad raced away, with High Eagle and Little Raven beside him, while Sun Bird wheeled his pony and galloped back to meet Curly Horse and the great company of Sioux fighting men.

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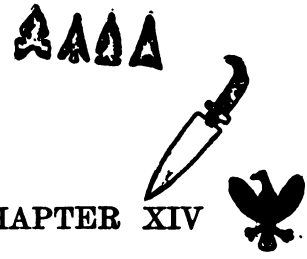

CHAPTER XIV

THE PLIGHT OF THE OGALALAS

TWO anxious days and two terrible nights had passed since High Eagle had crawled successfully through the Pawnee lines. During that time the great host of Pawnee fighting men had made many desperate attempts to enter the Ogalala village. In each attack, however, they had been compelled to recoil before the heroic defense of the Sioux. At the dawn of the third day, therefore, the camp was still in possession of its gallant defenders.

In spite of their apparent success, however, the Ogalalas were in a desperate plight. Many of the warriors had been killed, and many more had been wounded. Thus the Sioux force, which was outnumbered four to one at the beginning of hostilities, had been still further weakened, and most of the boys and all the old men had been called upon to take part in

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the fight. The food supply was exhausted, and they had already killed several ponies for meat. Fortunately the pool which supplied the water was located close to the edge of the village, and as yet the Pawnees had been unable to gain possession of it.

"My people, over there you see the first light of a new day," Wolf Robe told the Ogalalas as the dawn crept slowly above the rim of the plain. "Two suns have passed since the Wolf People came here to fight us. Well, we are still alive. The Pawnees have made many boasts, but we have laughed at them. Our women and children are safe in the lodges. We have killed many of our enemies. Pretty soon our brothers, the Minneconjoux, will come here. Yes, I am listening for the noise of their ponies. White Otter will lead them to this place. Then you will see how the Pawnees can run. My brothers, we have made a great fight. But I must tell you that it is not over. No, the Wolf People will keep trying to get into the village. Perhaps another sun will pass before the great chief, Curly Horse, and his warriors come here. Yes, perhaps two suns

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will pass. Well, we will keep off our enemies. They are many more than we are, but that is nothing to a Dacotah. We have plenty of ponies. We can give meat to our people. We have water. The Pawnees cannot get that. Yes, we will keep up the fight until our people come. You have heard the words of Wolf Robe."

"Ogalalas, you have listened to a great war chief," cried Yellow Horse, the medicine-man. "Wolf Robe has led us in many battles. We will keep his words in our hearts. Yes, we will show the boastful Pawnees that it takes many wolves to kill the bear in his den. We are Dacotahs! It is enough. Now it is getting light. We must watch."

As the narrow streak of light gradually broadened and reached across the sky, the Sioux listened expectantly for the first warning yell from their foes. They felt sure that they would make another attack before sunrise, and each moment's delay increased the suspense. However, when darkness finally merged into twilight, a long, quavering cry rose in the south. Then the Ogalalas knew that the expected assault was at hand. An ominous silence

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followed the signal. The Sioux looked anxiously for their foes. Their efforts were fruitless, however, for the light was still too weak to disclose objects beyond bow-shot, and it was evident that the cautious Pawnees were safely beyond that distance. The stillness was baffling. The Ogalalas were perplexed. They wondered why the Pawnees were delaying their attack. The maneuver made them suspicious.

"My brothers, we must keep watching," cried Wolf Robe. "The Wolf People are very sly. Perhaps they are moving forward like the fox. Then they will rush ahead. If we are not ready, then——"

At that instant he was interrupted by a wild outburst of piercing whoops, and a multitude of yelling horsemen emerged from the shadows and swept toward the camp. Having entirely surrounded the village, they charged with a reckless fury that might have temporarily demoralized the bravest foes. However, the Sioux faced them with the same calm determination that had made their resistance so effective in the previous attacks. Reserving their arrows until the Pawnees were close upon them,

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their deadly volleys took costly toll of ponies and riders. Although they exposed themselves with great bravery, the invaders were again prevented from reaching the village. Realizing, at length, that they were sacrificing themselves in vain, the Pawnees wheeled and raced from danger. Once beyond bow-shot, they rode furiously around the camp, shaking their weapons and shouting idle threats at the jeering Sioux.

The Ogalalas had repulsed this last attack without losing a man, although a number of warriors had been more or less severely wounded. They knew that they had inflicted heavy punishment upon the Pawnees, and they believed that the latter would be slow to renew the fight. The thought gave them considerable relief. They hoped that a strong force of tribesmen were racing to their aid, and they realized that if they could hold out another day they might be saved.

The Pawnees soon tired of riding around the village, and finally withdrew far out on the plain. Then, leaving a sufficient number of sentinels on each side of the camp, the several

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war parties united and rode from sight over a distant ridge. The Sioux knew at once that they had gone to hold a council of war, and they hoped that they might decide to abandon the siege.

"No, I do not believe that they will go away," said Wolf Robe. "They have come here to do a great thing. We have killed many of their people. Their hearts are very black against us. We must watch them. Perhaps they will wait until it is dark. But I must tell you that I believe they will make another great fight. Perhaps our brothers, the Minneconjoux, will come before that time. If they do not come here, then I do not know what will happen. I have spoken."

Soon after sunrise the Pawnees reappeared. Once more they separated into four companies. The suspicious Sioux watched them with much anxiety. However, it was soon evident that for the moment, at least, they had no intention of attacking the camp. They sat quietly on the ponies, watching the village like a pack of hungry wolves around a herd of buffaloes.

"Those people are thinking about some-

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thing," said Yellow Horse. "We must be very cautious."

"Yes, I believe they will try to fool us," declared old Crying Wolf, a warrior who had seen more than ninety winters.

However, as the day wore on, and the Pawnees made no further attempts against the village, the Sioux began to take heart. They believed that their determined foes were waiting to make one supreme effort under cover of the night, and they comforted themselves with the thought that their tribesmen would come to their assistance in the meantime. They felt sure that High Eagle had reached the Minneconjoux and delivered his appeal for aid. They peered anxiously toward the west, therefore, hoping each moment to see the dust signal that would tell them that help was at hand.

Then, when the long day finally passed, and the sun disappeared below the plain, their hopes began to dwindle. The thought of night filled them with dread. They had a gloomy premonition that unless the Minneconjoux arrived before dark, their own efforts would at

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last prove ineffectual. They believed that the vastly superior strength of their foes would eventually give them the victory. As yet the Pawnees had withdrawn before the deadly volleys that met them at the edge of the camp, but the Sioux feared that in the final attempt they might make one supreme sacrifice to achieve their object. In that event the Ogalalas realized that it would be impossible to keep them from the village. Once they had gained a foothold, their superiority in numbers would soon give them the victory. The bravest Sioux heart faltered at the possibility. They knew that it would mean torture and death for themselves, and captivity and slavish drudgery for their women and children. The peril appalled them. They turned their anxious faces to the sky and asked the Great Mystery to help them. Then they waited calmly for the falling of darkness, determined to meet whatever fate awaited them with the undying courage of their race.

"My people, I must tell you that my heart is heavy," said Wolf Robe, as the light slowly faded from the plain. "I have looked for

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something, but it has not come. I have listened for something, but I have not heard it. Curly Horse and his warriors are not here. Pretty soon it will be dark. I feel bad about it. Some of our bravest men are dead. Some are hurt and cannot fight. We have used many arrows. The Pawnees are very strong. They are like mad wolves. Their medicine-men will talk to them. They will tell them to do great things. When it is dark I believe they will rush ahead to fight us. Perhaps they will leave their ponies and crawl close to the lodges. We must watch with the eyes of the great war bird, and listen with the ears of the deer. But if they get into the camp, then we must fight until we die. Our women and children are in those lodges. I will ask you to keep thinking about it. Perhaps something has happened to High Eagle. The Minneconjoux have not come. I do not know about that. I have finished."

When Wolf Robe had ceased speaking, several famous warriors ran to the center of the camp and called out in a loud tone so that all might hear. They urged their comrades to

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be brave, and declared that the odds against them were not sufficient to cause defeat. They reminded their listeners that having successfully repulsed every attack of their foes, there was no reason to believe that they would not be equally successful in the final assault. They declared that they had no doubt that a great Minneconjoux war party was racing to their aid. They recalled many desperate battles with these same hated foes in which they had turned apparent defeat into victory. In this way these stout-hearted men infused their own heroic confidence into the hearts of their tribesmen, and roused them from the depths of gloom to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

"My brothers, I have listened to the words of those brave men," cried old Crying Wolf. "I am a very old man. My arms are weak. My eyes do not travel far. I am like a crooked stick. But those great words have made me strong. Yes, I am anxious to fight the Pawnees. I cannot send my arrows far, but if any of those people rush into the village I will count another coup before I die. My people, listen to the words of a very old man. Well,

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I must tell you what is in my heart. I believe that White Otter will do another great thing. Yes, I believe he will bring the great chief, Curly Horse, and his people to help us. I do not believe I will come out of this battle. But I will tell you that I am not afraid. No, I have been in many fights. I have killed many enemies. I have lived a long time. It is enough. Now I will do the best I can. I have finished."

The simple heroism of this famous old warrior found a ready sympathy in the hearts of his people. As he tottered toward the edge of the camp to take his place in the fighting line, his loyal self-sacrifice fired the resolution of the warriors and filled them with a determination to uphold the splendid traditions for which this aged veteran was willing to die.

As the evening shadows gradually closed in about the camp the Pawnees showed sudden signs of renewed activity. They approached nearer to the village, as if they feared that the Sioux might attempt to send away scouts under cover of the dusk. Then riders began to race about the plain, apparently carrying

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instructions to the various war companies. This maneuver made the Ogalalas believe that their foes had become impatient, and intended to attack them without further delay.

"Those riders are telling the war leaders the words of the great war chief," said Wolf Robe. "Pretty soon they will rush ahead to fight us. Curly Horse and his people are not here. We must make this great fight alone."

A few moments afterward the Pawnees faded from sight in the gathering gloom, and the Sioux increased their vigilance. The thought of what might happen before the dawn of another day filled them with many disturbing misgivings. Still they knew that it would be fatal to give way to those dismal premonitions. Therefore, they fought down their doubts and fortified themselves with the determination to administer a final, crushing defeat to their foes.

During the day Wolf Robe had ordered the women to collect the supply of fire-wood and distribute it in a number of piles along the edge of the camp. Now, as darkness closed down, he appointed a lad, with a buffalo horn

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containing tinder and several glowing embers, to stand beside each pile of fuel. In the event of the Pawnees dismounting and attempting to steal into the camp under cover of the night, the crafty Ogalala chief planned to ignite his beacons and flood the village and the surrounding plain with light.

Wolf Robe's precaution was a timely one, for the wily Pawnees did exactly what he feared they might attempt. Dismounting some distance from the village, they left their ponies under a strong guard and advanced noiselessly on foot. They were within bow-shot of the camp before the Sioux discovered them. Then, as they heard the alarm, they rushed forward, yelling at the top of their voices to confuse their enemies.

However, the Sioux had already called to the boys with the embers, and before the Pawnees actually reached the edge of the village the dry fuel was blazing fiercely, and the camp was flooded with light. The unexpected illumination completely surprised the invaders, and for a moment they hesitated in bewilderment. The Sioux took advantage of the opportunity, and

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delivered a furious volley of arrows at short range. Attacked at the very moment when they were attempting to rally from their sudden surprise, the Pawnees fell back in dismay. Then, as the arrows of the Sioux continued to thin their ranks, they recovered from their bewilderment and rushed recklessly to the border of the camp. A desperate struggle immediately followed, as the opposing forces met in a deadly hand-to-hand encounter. Warrior grappled with warrior, and the fight became a series of personal combats. The Sioux were greatly handicapped by the odds against them, but the terrorized cries of the women and children in the lodges gave them courage, and they fought with a strength and courage that astounded their foes. The old men and the boys fought as heroically as the warriors. For a time their gallant efforts seemed of little avail, for the Pawnees were determined to enter the village. In spite of their superior numbers, however, they were unable to fight their way between the valiant Ogalalas. The latter were resolved to die rather than yield a foot of ground, and their indomitable courage made

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them invincible. At last their heroic struggle was crowned with success, for the Pawnees began to give way. Fearing a trap, Wolf Robe called out and warned his people against leaving the camp to follow them. There was one, however, for whom the caution had no meaning. It was old Crying Wolf. He seemed to have suddenly gone mad from excitement. Whooping shrilly, the aged warrior left the village and hobbled boldly after the retreating Pawnees. As several Ogalalas rushed to his rescue he fell, a bow-shot from the camp, with a Pawnee arrow through his heart.

When their foes had retreated into the night, the Sioux took account of their loss. They found that the encounter had cost them dear, for many prominent warriors had sacrificed themselves to keep the Pawnees from the village. The death of old Crying Wolf filled them with gloom, and they recalled his ominous prophecy on the eve of the battle.

"He was a great man," said Wolf Robe, who had survived the encounter unharmed. "Crying Wolf did many things for his people. But he was very old. He died like a warrior. I

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believe it is the thing he wanted to do. Now he has gone on the Long Trail. Well, we will talk about him a long time."

However, the Ogalalas found little time to either eulogize the dead or attend the wounded, for it was not long before the night again rang with excited whoops. It was evident that the Pawnees intended to make another attempt to enter the camp. The Sioux threw fresh fuel on the fires, and watched anxiously for their foes to appear within the great circle of light that surrounded the village. The yells were quickly followed by the thunder of hoofs, and the Ogalalas realized that the Pawnees were again relying on their ponies to force their way into the village.

This time the fighting was even fiercer than in the preceding attacks. The reckless bravery of the invaders soon made it evident that they were staking everything on one great final assault. The thought nerved the Sioux to fight as they had never fought before. In spite of their heroism, however, some of the Pawnees found a weak spot in the line of defense, and gained a foothold in the village. Before they

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could reach the ponies, or the lodges which sheltered the women and children, Wolf Robe led a picked company of warriors to attack them. They fought with a wild fury that finally forced the invaders from the camp. In the desperate encounter, however, Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse were separated from their companions, and surrounded by their foes. The Pawnees instantly recognized these two famous warriors, and, instead of killing them, they made them prisoners, and carried them away before the Ogalalas knew what had happened.

A few moments later word of the capture was carried through the entire force of Pawnees. They immediately abandoned the attack on the camp, and raced away, yelling in triumph. The unexpected maneuver caused wild rejoicing among the Ogalalas, who were still ignorant of the desperate plight of their unfortunate tribesmen.

The Pawnees had already ridden beyond hearing when the first inquiry for Wolf Robe was made. Then, as they were searching for him among the warriors at the edge of the camp, they suddenly missed Yellow Horse.

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When they failed to find them, the Ogalalas were thrown into a frenzy of despair. At first they believed that both these great men had been killed, but when they did not find them among those who had fallen in the fight, the truth suddenly flashed into their minds.

"Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse have been carried away by the Pawnees!"

When the terrible announcement rang through the camp, the Ogalalas were stunned into silence. It was the crowning shock of the great disaster which had befallen them, and they were unable to rally from the blow. They realized the hopelessness of attempting an immediate rescue, and they feared that to delay would mean certain death to their famous tribesmen. While the principal men of the tribe were gathered in gloomy council, attempting to determine the wisest plan of action, they were roused by a joyous shout from the warriors along the west side of the camp.

"We have heard the bark of the little gray fox!" they cried, excitedly. "Yes, our people are coming. Listen, someone is leading ponies to the camp."

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"We must be cautious; perhaps they are Pawnees," warned Spotted Dog, a famous war leader, who had assumed command.

"Well, pretty soon they will come into the light. Then we will see who they are," declared the impatient watchers.

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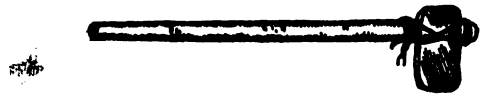

CHAPTER XV

WHITE OTTER'S BOLD RESOLVE

WHITE OTTER'S anxiety for his people made him indifferent to his own safety, and he rode recklessly through the night, risking ambush and sudden death at the hands of his foes. High Eagle and Little Raven seemed equally unconcerned. They were willing to take desperate chances to get within sight of the Ogalala village and learn the answer to the question that was torturing their minds. As they actually neared the vicinity, however, White Otter himself advised greater caution.

"We are coming close to our enemies," he said. "If they kill us then what we have done will be foolish. A scout must save himself to help his people. Now we will go ahead easy. We must watch, and listen like the fox."

They slackened their ponies and advanced very cautiously. For a long time they heard

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nothing to rouse their suspicions, and the very stillness added to their fears. They wondered whether the Pawnees, having achieved their object, had already ridden away. Their courage weakened at the thought. Then, as they stopped on the crest of a ridge, they heard a wild outburst of yells, far away toward the east. Their hearts beat frantically as they turned to one another with flashing eyes.

"Listen!" cried White Otter. "The fight is still going on. Yes, the Ogalalas are keeping the Wolf People out of the camp. Come, we will ride over there and try to do something."

They galloped away in the direction of the Ogalala camp. However, when they again stopped to listen, the noise had ceased. They listened anxiously, hoping to hear something that would tell them that the Sioux had successfully withstood the attack. The silence troubled them. It made it evident that the fight was over. The thought suggested a number of alarming possibilities.

"Come, my brothers, we must go near to the camp," declared White Otter. "Then we will know about this thing."

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As they started away they again heard a wild clamor in the direction of the Ogalala village, and they believed that the fight had been renewed. The thought filled them with hope, for they knew that the Sioux had repulsed the first attack successfully. As the confused babel of sound echoed faintly across the plain, the three scouts stopped and made an earnest appeal to the Great Mystery. Then they lashed their ponies into a furious sprint, and raced away to aid their tribesmen.

"I believe those scouts have told their people about us," cried White Otter. "Now they know about the war party that is coming to fight them. They are making another great fight to get into the camp. Perhaps they will do this thing. I am thinking about it. It is bad."

A short time afterward they rode to the top of another low ridge, and saw the glow of the Ogalala fires. As they were watching them, however, they heard the shouts and whoops of the Pawnees rising some distance south of the camp. Each moment the noise sounded farther from the village, and it soon became evident

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that the Pawnees were withdrawing. A mighty chorus of yells from the camp convinced White Otter and his companions that the Sioux had finally been victorious. The thought sent them into an ecstasy of joy.

"Listen, my brothers!" White Otter cried, delightedly. "The Pawnees are running away. Yes, my people have made a great fight. The Wolf People know about this great war party. They are running away before our people come. But we will follow them. Yes, Curly Horse and Laughing Bird will chase them. Now we will go ahead, and find out about this thing."

"My brother, I believe that what you say is true," replied Little Raven. "If your people have chased away all those Pawnees they have done a great thing. Pretty soon we will know about it. But when our people come here, then we must go on to fight the boastful Wolf People. Yes, I believe I will count many coups, and take some good ponies."

"Yes, the Pawnees are going away," declared High Eagle. "But it has been a great battle. I believe many of our brothers have been killed. Yes, I am proud about this thing,

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but I must tell you that my heart is heavy. I believe that something bad has happened to our people. I do not like to talk about it. I have been in many battles. When I feel like that in my heart it is always bad."

The older warrior's gloomy prophecy instantly sobered White Otter and Little Raven. They began to realize that the victory might have been a costly one. The thought increased White Otter's anxiety, and he determined to learn exactly what had happened without further delay. He felt certain that the Pawnees had really departed, and he raced toward the camp with little attempt at concealment.

"We must be cautious when we come near the village," High Eagle warned him. "Our people will be watching. When they hear us perhaps they will take us for Pawnees. Perhaps they will send their arrows through us."

"Yes, what you say is so," agreed White Otter. "But we will stop before we go near enough to be killed. Then I will make the sound of the little gray fox. When our people hear that they will feel good again."

When they finally came close to the camp,

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they stopped, and White Otter imitated the bark of the prairie fox. In a few moments an answer sounded from the border of the village. Then he repeated the signal three times, and, when he received a reply, he and his companions rode boldly toward the lodges. As they showed themselves in the glow from the fires, they were immediately challenged by the suspicious guards at the edge of the camp.

"Ho, my brothers, we are Dacotahs; we have come to tell you something good," cried White Otter.

"It is White Otter!" cried the delighted Ogalalas. "He has brought Curly Horse and his people to help us."

When the three scouts rode their exhausted ponies into the village, a few moments later, they saw all the evidences of a tragedy. It was apparent that the Sioux loss had been even greater than they had anticipated. White Otter and High Eagle recognized many loyal friends among the dead and wounded, and as they gazed upon them they were filled with a wild desire for vengeance. Then White Otter turned to search the great throng of people

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who were crowding eagerly about them. When he failed to discover his grandfather, a great fear entered his heart. He had grave doubts of Wolf Robe's safety, and he feared to ask for him. Before he could frame the difficult inquiry, however, he was startled by a series of piercing screams from one of the lodges. The next moment Singing Wind, his grandmother, rushed toward him, frantically waving her arms, and crying out hysterically.

"My grandfather has been killed," White Otter told High Eagle.

As Singing Wind reached his side she fell to the ground, prostrated by her grief. White Otter and High Eagle raised her with great tenderness, and attempted to comfort her. The loyal old woman was beside herself, and it was some moments before she could speak. Then she threw her arms about White Otter and sobbed out her story.

"Ah, my son, I must tell you something bad," she cried. "Your grandfather, the great chief, Wolf Robe, has been taken away by the Pawnees. Yes, there is a great hole in my heart. Perhaps they have killed him. You

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must find out about it. If he is dead, then I will die. You have done some great things, my son. Now I will ask you to do the greatest thing of all. Yes, I will ask you to go and find out about your grandfather. If the Pawnees have killed him, then you must come back and tell me. But if he is alive in that camp, then you must take him away. You are the son of Standing Buffalo—I believe you can do this thing. That is all I can say."

As Singing Wind ended her frantic appeal she tottered backward and would have collapsed had not White Otter thrown his arm about her. The Ogalalas watched in silence as the striking young warrior and the frail old woman looked searchingly into each other's eyes. Then, when Singing Wind finally recovered her strength, White Otter made his reply.

"My mother, I have heard your words; they have cut into my heart like Pawnee arrows," he said. "But I am a Dacotah. Yes, I am the son of Standing Buffalo. It is enough. I know what to do. I will follow the Pawnees and find out about my grandfather. If he has been killed, then I will not come back. No, I will

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rush into the camp and fight until I die. But if he is alive I will bring him away. Spotted Dog has told me about Yellow Horse. Well, I will find out about him. Now I must tell my brothers, the Ogalalas, that a great war party is coming behind me. Yes, pretty soon you will hear a big noise, like the Thunder Birds flapping their wings. It is the sound of racing ponies. They are carrying Curly Horse, and a great war party of Minneconjoux. But I will tell you something better. They are carrying the great war chief, Laughing Bird, and a great war party of Uncapapas. Pretty soon these people will come here. Then you must tell my brother, Sun Bird, about me. Perhaps he will tell Curly Horse about it. Then our people will go to the Pawnee camp to fight. I will watch for them. Now I am going to take a fast pony. Yes, I am going away. My mother, you must keep your heart strong. If I come back I will bring my grandfather. If you do not see me again, then you will know that I have done what I told you about. I have finished."

White Otter was immediately besieged by a

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host of volunteers, who were eager to accompany him on his perilous mission. He refused them, however, and told them to wait for the great war party which he felt sure would follow him to the Pawnee camp. Still, there was one who would not be denied. It was Little Raven.

"My brother, it is true that I have not done many great things," said the loyal Minneconjoux lad. "But I am not afraid to die. You say if you do not find your grandfather you will go into the Pawnee camp and fight until they kill you. Well, it is a brave thing to do. But I will go with you. If we go together, we will kill more Pawnees. If the great chief, Wolf Robe, and the great medicine-man, Yellow Horse, are alive, perhaps I will help you. No, my brother, I will not stay back. I am a Dacotah. Yes, I am the son of Rain Crow. I must carry out what it is in my heart to do. I will ask you for a fast pony. Yes, I am going with you."

"Little Raven, your words make me feel big in my heart," White Otter replied, with genuine emotion. "But I must tell you that you

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are doing a foolish thing. You are very brave, but you must keep your life. Wolf Robe is my grandfather. He has given me many good things. There is only one thing to do if he is alive: I must try to get him away. There is only one thing to do if he is dead: I must go into the camp and kill as many Pawnees as I can. You say you will go with me. Well, I must tell you another time that it is a foolish thing to do. But I know that you are a Dacotah. Yes, you will do what it is in your heart to do. Perhaps this thing will make you a great man. Perhaps you will be killed. I have finished."

"White Otter, I must go with you," declared Little Raven.

"Ogalalas, I must tell you something," cried White Otter. "Little Raven, the son of Rain Crow, the great Minneconjoux medicine-man, is going with me to the Pawnee camp."

Then the two fearless young warriors rode away on two of Wolf Robe's fastest ponies. The Ogalalas were too heavily burdened with grief to rouse themselves sufficiently to make a demonstration, and except for the wailing of

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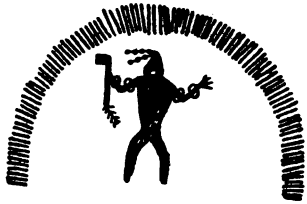
the women and the excited cries of a few old men, the lads were permitted to depart in silence.

"White Otter is very brave. Yes, he is as cautious as the fox. He has done a great thing. But I believe he will be killed," Spotted Bear declared, gloomily, as the hoof-beats of the ponies died away in the distance.

The Ogalalas endorsed his words with their silence. There were few among them who expected to again see the courageous youths who had just ridden away.



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CHAPTER XVI

A BAFFLING TRAIL

WHITE OTTER felt certain that the Pawnees had been warned of the approaching Sioux war party, and he believed that they would ride furiously to reach their own territory before the Dacotahs overtook them. He realized, therefore, that it would be foolhardy to attempt to come up with them before they arrived at their permanent camp. However, the thought of what might happen to Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse in the meantime filled him with despair. He knew only too well the intense hatred that the Sioux and the Pawnees held for each other, and he feared that the latter might take sudden vengeance upon their helpless captives. His one hope was that the war chiefs would insist that the prisoners be spared until they reached the camp, so that the entire Pawnee nation might participate in their punishment and death. Still, he realized

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that even if his unfortunate tribesmen reached the Pawnee village in safety his chances for saving them were slight indeed. He feared that the Pawnees would waste little time in putting them to death, and he knew that unless he arrived at the hostile camp soon after his foes he might be too late.

"We must keep near the Wolf People," he told Little Raven. "If they take those two brave warriors to the camp, perhaps they will kill them before we come to that place. Well, we must be near enough to do something."

"You are the leader," replied Little Raven. "I will listen to your words."

At daylight they searched the plain for signs of the Pawnees. When they failed to discover them, they separated and reconnoitered in different directions. It was not long until White Otter found the fresh tracks of the Pawnee ponies. He immediately called Little Raven, and they hurried away on the trail.

"Perhaps some scouts are watching," suggested White Otter. "We must look sharp."

"Yes, we will keep watching ahead," replied Little Raven.

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The day was more than half gone before they saw anything to awaken their suspicions. Then they suddenly discovered that the trail divided into three distinct branches. The main trail continued toward the south, another trail turned abruptly toward the west, and a third trail swerved toward the east. White Otter regarded them in dismay. He instantly recognized the unexpected maneuver as a wily bit of stratagem to confuse the Sioux war party. It was evident that the crafty Pawnees feared pursuit, and hoped in this manner to throw their enemies from their trail. However, it was also possible that they hoped to induce the Sioux force to separate into smaller companies to follow them. Then they might suddenly unite, and attack one of the weakened commands. But whatever was the reason for the ruse, it completely bewildered the anxious young Ogalala.

"This thing fills my heart with clouds," he told Little Raven. "I do not know about it. The Wolf People have fooled us. It is bad. I do not know what to do."

Little Raven remained silent. He realized

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that in such a predicament he must submit to the greater experience of White Otter. The loyal Minneconjoux had implicit confidence in the ability of his friend. He believed that the sharp-witted Ogalala would eventually think of a way to overcome the difficulty. Many moments passed while they sat quietly on their ponies, gazing gloomily at the confusing trails. Then White Otter determined on a plan of action.

"There is only one thing to do," he said. "We must find out if these trails go far. You must go one way and I will go another way. Perhaps we will come together. But if these trails do not turn before the sun goes away, then we will come back here and talk about it. Perhaps the Pawnees are watching to see someone do this thing. I will tell you to be very cautious."

"I will use my eyes," Little Raven promised.

A moment later they separated. White Otter followed the trail toward the west, and Little Raven turned toward the east. They rode until sunset, and then, as the tracks

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showed no signs of turning to join the original trail toward the south, the discouraged young scouts returned to the place where they had parted. It was dark when they finally met.

"My brother, I must tell you something bad," White Otter said, disconsolately. "That trail does not turn around. There is only one thing to do. I must follow it."

"White Otter, I must tell you that I saw the same thing," replied Little Raven. "I went a long way but those tracks went straight ahead. When the sun went away I thought about your words. Then I turned around and came here. Now you must tell me how to do this thing."

For some moments White Otter remained silent. It was evident that the baffling maneuver of his foes had greatly upset him. He knew that it meant a delay, and he realized that each lost moment weakened his chance of saving the Ogalala prisoners. Still, he knew that it would be fatal to give way to his fears.

"Yes, I will tell you how to do this thing," he assured Little Raven. "We must wait here until it is light. Then we will go different ways.

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We will follow those trails and find out where they go. If they come back to this straight trail, then we will leave three stones in three tracks. That will tell us that we are both on that trail. If I find those stones, I will keep going until I come up with you. If you find those stones, then you must keep going until you find me. I have finished."

"My brother, I have listened to your words —now I know what to do," said Little Raven. "But I must tell you that I am heavy in my heart. Perhaps we will not see each other again. Perhaps the Pawnees will kill us. Well, I will not think about it."

"You are a warrior," White Otter reminded him. "A warrior wipes those things from his heart."

Fearing that Pawnee scouts might follow the trail back under cover of the night, to learn if they were followed, the wily young Sioux made a long detour and camped farther to the west. They muzzled and picketed the ponies, and took turns watching until the faint gray streak in the east finally ended their suspense.

"Now we must go away," White Otter said

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soberly. "Little Raven, you are my brother. You are very brave. You are going to do a hard thing. Perhaps you will be killed. I will take your hand."

"White Otter, you have called me your brother—it is true," replied Little Raven. "Yes, we are going away from each other. Perhaps we will never meet again. Well, I will do the best I can. Now I will take your hand."

They stood a moment, silently clasping hands. Then they mounted their ponies and rode away. The eastern sky was tinged with gray, but the plain was still dark. They rode rapidly toward the place where each had abandoned his search the day before.

Darkness had already given way to daylight when White Otter reached the grassy swale where he had ended his reconnoissance the previous day. He immediately set out on the trail, riding slowly, and keeping a sharp watch for Pawnee scouts. There was constant peril of running into an ambush, and, wherever the plain offered suitable concealment for his foes, he made a wide detour, and kept safely out of arrow-range. As the trail continued di-

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rectly toward the west, he feared that this company of Pawnees were actually from another village. The possibility caused him much concern. He realized that once the main force of his foes divided into different bands, it might be necessary to visit each camp before he could locate his tribesmen. In that event he felt certain that his efforts would be useless, as he had little doubt that Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse would have already met their fate before he could even find them. Therefore, the anxious lad rode along with a heavy heart, and a mind filled with all sorts of disquieting misgivings.

The day was far advanced when he finally learned that his long detour had been in vain. The trail suddenly ended in an intricate maze of tracks, which scattered in all directions. As White Otter realized how easily he had fallen into the wily trap that had been set for him, a great rage entered his heart, and his eyes flashed threateningly. He knew at once that the Pawnees had simply separated temporarily to delay their pursuers. Having lured them a day's journey from the real trail, they had

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scattered and gone to join the main command. White Otter saw it all plainly enough now, but he feared that the trick had already achieved its purpose. He believed that the delay would prove fatal to Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse.

For a moment the discouraged Ogalala lost heart. It seemed mere folly to continue in the face of the unexpected difficulties that beset him. Still, he banished all idea of turning back. He had given his word to his grandmother, and even if he could not save Wolf Robe, he was determined to rush into the Pawnee village and avenge him. The frantic appeals of old Singing Wind rang in his ears, and the memory of her grief restored his confidence. He told himself that he might still save the Ogalala war chief. The possibility drove him to action. Wheeling his pony, he raced madly toward the east.

White Otter knew that there were two things to do. The first was to return to the main trail of the Pawnees and leave a sign to warn the Sioux war party from repeating his blunder. The second was to find Little Raven. He felt

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sure that the false trail which the Minneconjoux had followed would either end in a hopeless tangle of tracks, or eventually return to the original trail. Therefore, he hoped to find Little Raven somewhere along the route taken by the main company of Pawnees.

It was almost dark when White Otter again returned to the place where the false trails began. His heart burned with anger as he realized the time he had lost, each precious moment a link in the chain that was dragging Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse to their doom. Still, he hoped that in spite of the delay he might yet arrive at the Pawnee village in time to aid his tribesmen. It was barely possible that the Pawnees might spare the captives for several days, and White Otter strengthened his confidence with the thought.

Aware that there was not an instant to lose, he proceeded to leave a warning for the war party. Riding to a little patch of willows, he selected a long, slender branch, and peeled the bark from one end. Then he stuck it in one of the hoof-prints, with the peeled end pointing in the direction of the Pawnee village. Next,

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he placed a barrier of small stones across each of the false trails. Then he mounted his pony and galloped along the original trail.

When night finally closed down, White Otter dismounted to follow the tracks of the Pawnee ponies. He moved slowly forward, listening and watching for some evidence of Little Raven. As time passed and he failed to find him he began to worry. He wondered whether the fearless lad had fallen into the hands of the Wolf People. He tried to reassure himself with the possibility that the trail toward the east had actually continued to another camp.

Then a sound came out of the night, a short distance ahead of him, and he instantly drew his pony from the trail, and prepared his bow. As he listened the noise was repeated, and he recognized it as the attempt of a muzzled pony to call to one of its kind. His own horse tried to reply, but he instantly grasped its nostrils and smothered it with a heavy fold of buckskin. Then he imitated the bark of the little gray fox. In a few moments he received a crude reply. He knew at once that it came from Little Raven.

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"Ho, my brother, I see that you have come back; it is good," White Otter called softly.

"My ears tell me that you are my brother, White Otter," replied Little Raven.

A moment afterward they met. Little Raven said that the tracks which he had followed had rejoined the main trail at that very spot. He declared that he had seen nothing but antelope and buffaloes and some stray prairie wolves.

"Perhaps they were Pawnee scouts," White Otter suggested.

"No, I came close to those animals, and I know that they were wolves," Little Raven assured him.

"Well, now we know about this thing," said the Ogalala, "we must go on. Perhaps the Pawnees have reached their camp. Perhaps they have sent Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse on the Long Trail. But we must not wait. Now I will go to that village and do the thing I have set out to do. If my grandfather is not there, then I will rush into the camp and throw myself away. But I will kill many Pawnees before I die. My brother, this is how it is in

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my heart to do. If you feel different, then you must turn back. I have finished."

"My brother, you have spoken brave words," declared Little Raven. "But I must tell you that I will not turn around. Perhaps we will help Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. But if they have been sent away, then I will go into the camp to die with you. This is how the thing is in my heart."

"You are as brave as your brother, Sun Bird," said White Otter. "If you come out of this thing, you will be a great warrior. Yes, I will tell all the Dacotahs about you. Now we will go."

As they cantered boldly forward into the night, the long, dismal wail of the prairie wolf sounded some distance away toward the west. White Otter instantly stopped his pony to listen. In a few moments an answer came from the east. The calls were so perfect, however, that the keen ears of the Ogalala could find no reason to suspect them. Still, he was suspicious. He was unable to overcome a disturbing premonition that had worried him throughout the day; he felt almost certain that both

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Little Raven and he had been watched by Pawnee scouts.

"I believe that the Pawnees are telling about us," White Otter whispered, uneasily.

"Do your ears tell you that?" inquired Little Raven.

"No, my ears tell me that it is the cry of the wolf, but my heart tells me a different thing," replied White Otter.

They waited some moments longer, but the calls were not repeated. Then the two daring young scouts resumed their perilous advance through the darkness. They had not gone far, however, when the lonely cry in the west was repeated. This time they did not stop, but listened anxiously as they cantered along. There was no answer from the east, and Little Raven felt somewhat reassured.

"I believe it is a wolf," he told White Otter.

The Ogalala made no reply.

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CHAPTER XVII

A PEEP INTO THE PAWNEE CAMP

THE lads rode continuously throughout the night, guiding themselves by the stars, and traveling toward the south. At dawn they again found the tracks of the Pawnee ponies. However, they feared to follow the trail in daylight. They had little doubt that alert Pawnee scouts had been stationed on the ridges to watch for the Sioux war party. There seemed nothing to do, therefore, but to spend the day in concealment, until darkness again made it safe to venture forward in search of the Pawnee camp. It meant another perilous delay, and White Otter's heart sank at the thought of the possible consequences. Still, he knew that it would be foolhardy to risk being seen by hostile scouts. He felt sure that such an unfortunate mishap would destroy the last chance of the prisoners whom he wished to save.

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"Yes, we must wait here until it is dark," he told Little Raven. "It is bad. But I believe it is the only thing to do. If we go ahead, perhaps the Pawnees will see us. Then they will know what we are trying to do. It is enough. They will kill Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. They must not know about us. We will wait here. Now we must look around for a good place to hide in."

"Well, if that is how the thing is in your heart, then we must do it," replied Little Raven.

The plain was still shrouded in the dim, misty half-light of dawn, and they had little fear of being seen. Riding a short distance west of the Pawnee trail, they came upon the dry rocky bed of a stream. As it was considerably below the level of the plain, it offered an ideal place of concealment. Furthermore, it led away in a general southerly direction, and the eager young scouts hoped that by following it they might eventually come within sight of the Pawnee camp.

Once in the bottom of the ravine, the Sioux immediately set out along the tortuous, rocky

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stream-bed. As daylight strengthened, White Otter crept up the bank to reconnoiter. A long, undulating sweep of the plain obstructed his view toward the south, but in every other direction he saw to the horizon. The ground was open and bare of cover, and he discovered nothing to awaken his suspicions. The south, however, was still a mystery. The low ridge that barred his vision suggested many alarming possibilities, and White Otter regarded it with much distrust. He saw that the stream-bed apparently cut through it, in a deep ravine, farther to the west. It looked like an ideal spot for an ambush. He wondered whether Pawnee sentinels were concealed at that perilous pass. Then, having learned all that it was possible to know for the moment, the Ogalala descended into the gully to join his companion.

"Well, I have looked around and I will tell you about it," he told Little Raven. "I did not see any Pawnees. No, on both sides, and back there where we came from, I saw everything. There is no place to hide, and there is nothing to harm us. But ahead of us it is different. Yes, that way I saw a ridge. Per-

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haps some scouts are watching there. Perhaps the Pawnee camp is behind it. I do not know about it. But I will tell you that this gully goes through it. Yes, over there I saw the place where it crawls through. I believe we will be in great danger if we go over there before it is dark. But if we wait, perhaps it will be too late to help Wolf Robe. Yes, I am going ahead to find out about this thing. When we come near that place I will ask you to stay behind with the ponies. Then I will crawl ahead as easy as the fox. I believe it is the only thing to do."

"I will listen to your words," agreed Little Raven.

They advanced cautiously along the dry watercourse until it made an abrupt turn toward the west. Then White Otter again crawled carefully to the top of the bank. He saw that the bed of the stream continued still farther toward the west, and then turned sharply toward the ravine that cut through the ridge. He believed, therefore, that it would be perilous to take the ponies any farther until he had made a thorough reconnoissance.

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As White Otter was about to descend into the ravine to announce his plan to Little Raven, his sharp eyes discovered something against the sky, above the crest of the ridge. For several moments he was unable to convince himself that he had actually seen it, and he watched anxiously to learn whether his eyes had played him a trick. Then he saw it again, more distinctly than before, and his heart beat wildly. It was smoke. Aware that he was within a short distance of the great Pawnee camp, White Otter scrambled frantically down the rocky bank of the ravine to tell Little Raven of his discovery.

"My brother, my eyes have found a great thing!" he cried, excitedly. "Yes, I saw smoke rising behind that ridge. We are close to the great Pawnee village. We must be very cautious. I believe it would be foolish to go any nearer before it is dark. We will wait here and watch. Then, when it is dark, I will go ahead. I will crawl through that ravine, and try to get near the camp. Perhaps I will find out about Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. Now I am going to crawl up there to watch."

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"White Otter, I have listened to your words," replied Little Raven. "You have told how you will do this thing. Well, I must tell you that I will go with you. If you do not find your people, then you will rush into the camp to die. I will not stay behind. No, I have told what I will do. I must go through with it. I have spoken."

"What you say is true," declared White Otter. "I will not keep you from doing what you have set out to do. But first I must find out about this thing. I will tell you that if I do not see my people in that camp, then I will come back. Yes, I will tell you what I am going to do. If you feel like going into the camp to die with me, then you must do it. But perhaps I will find my people. You must wait here until I know about it. I am the son of Standing Buffalo, and I have spoken."

"You say that you will come back here," replied Little Raven. "It is enough. I will wait. But I must tell you something different. Perhaps the Pawnees will come here and find us before it is dark."

"When the fox hides, it is hard to find him,"

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declared White Otter. "We will be very cautious."

Although the lads watched steadily until night-fall, they failed to see anything of their enemies. However, they had little doubt that a number of Pawnee scouts were concealed along the summit of the ridge. The possibility made them extremely wary, and they waited until the last ray of light had faded from the plain before they ventured to advance. Then, when they reached the sharp turn toward the south, White Otter left his pony with Little Raven, and disappeared into the night.

The young Ogalala moved cautiously along the rocky bed of the stream, with the swift, noiseless tread of a panther. He advanced until he saw the sharp, clear-cut edge of the ravine showing against the sky. Then he stopped. For some moments he crouched in the shadow of the bank, listening for some warning of his foes. The stillness failed to quiet his suspicions. He felt sure that the narrow pass was guarded by keen-eared sentinels. He feared it. For a moment or so he was undecided just how to proceed. Then he made his decision, and

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climbed noiselessly up the side of the gully.

Once on the plain, White Otter made a short detour toward the east. Then, when he was several arrow-flights from the stream, he turned directly toward the ridge. As he came within bow-shot of it, he again stopped to listen. Hearing nothing to arouse his fears, he advanced through the darkness as quietly as a shadow. He reached the low, grassy slope in safety, and crawled cautiously to the summit. As he peered carefully over the crest of the ridge, he saw the fires twinkling in the great Pawnee camp. It was scarcely more than a bow-shot away, and the anxious Ogalala fairly trembled with eagerness.

Fearing that a moment's delay might prove fatal, White Otter crept slowly over the summit of the ridge, and descended to the level plain on the other side. Then he hurried toward the Pawnee village. As he neared the edge of the camp, he sank to his hands and knees, and crawled forward with the stealth and caution of a lynx. He advanced to the very border of the village. Then he concealed himself in the heavy shadows from the lodges, and

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peered anxiously into the camp. It was brightly illuminated by a number of great fires, and White Otter was able to study his foes at close range. The entire tribe seemed to be assembled, and he believed that the people were discussing something of importance. Then, as his eyes traveled swiftly over the great company of warriors, he started, and almost cried out in his excitement. With the Pawnees were Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. Both were securely bound, and closely guarded, but neither seemed to have been harmed. White Otter looked upon them with amazement. His great joy bewildered him. He had approached the camp with little hope of finding them alive. Now, as he saw them apparently uninjured, he could scarcely believe his eyes. He wondered why the Pawnees had spared them. However, he lost little time attempting to solve the riddle. His one thought was how he might take advantage of the temporary respite that had been granted to his tribesmen.

White Otter was soon convinced that no matter what the final fate of the prisoners might be, they were to be spared for the night at

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least. The thought filled him with hope. If the Pawnees would only wait until the following night, he believed he could save the captives. He felt sure that by that time the great Sioux war party would be within striking distance of the camp, and he believed they would surprise and completely overwhelm their foes. Still, he knew that unless he could think of a way to protect the helpless prisoners, the Pawnees would kill them at the first warning of an attack. He waited, therefore, until he saw Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse taken to one of the lodges. Then he withdrew from the camp, and made his perilous return to Little Raven.

"My brother, my heart is filled with the songs of birds," White Otter cried, joyously, as he finally rejoined the loyal Minneconjoux. "Yes, I have seen my grandfather, the great chief, Wolf Robe, and Yellow Horse, the wonderful medicine-man. They are alive in the Pawnee camp. I watched until I saw them taken into a lodge. Then the camp quieted down. Now I know where they are. I do not believe that the Pawnees will kill them before another sun goes

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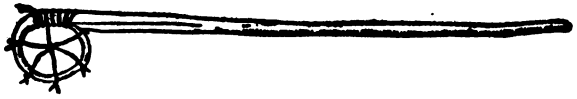
by. I believe we will get them out of that camp."

"Your words have filled my heart with sunshine," declared Little Raven. You have done a good thing. I believe we will take your people out of that camp. But I must tell you another thing. After you went away, I heard something. I listened a long time. Then I heard someone coming. I tried to lead away the ponies. But someone was right behind me. Pretty soon I heard two people talking. They were speaking Sioux words. Then my heart was glad. I called out and told them my name. Pretty soon Short Bear and two Uncapapas came here. Yes, the great war party is back there on the plain. The Uncapapas have gone away to tell about us, but Short Bear will take us to Curly Horse."

"Where is Short Bear?" inquired the Ogalala.

"I am here, my brother," replied the famous Minneconjoux, as he suddenly appeared out of the night.

"It is good. We will go," said White Otter.



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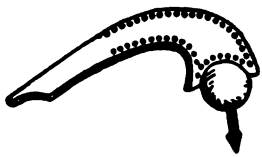

CHAPTER XVIII

A DARING ATTEMPT

THE night was almost gone when Short Bear and his companions finally reached the great company of Sioux warriors. They were concealed behind a high ridge, about half a day's journey from the Pawnee camp. White Otter found that Spotted Bear and a strong force of Ogalalas had joined the war party. The lads went directly to Curly Horse, and told him what they had learned. When the Ogalalas heard that their two famous tribesmen were still alive, they were beside themselves with excitement. Some of the more impulsive warriors wished to attack the Pawnees at once, but the war chiefs and the older men advised them to wait.

"Men of the Dacotah nation, you have heard good words," said Curly Horse. "Yes, White Otter has found his people in the Pawnee camp.

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It is good. We must try to get them away. I will tell you the best way to do this thing. Pretty soon it will be light. Well, it would be foolish to go ahead when the Pawnees can see us. Then the scouts would ride into the village, and tell about us. If the Wolf People see us coming to fight them, I believe they will kill those two brave Ogalalas. No, we must not let them see us. We will wait here until another sun passes. But we will send out scouts to watch. Then, when it is dark again, I will send some brave men to crawl into the camp. They must go to the edge of the village, and wait. Then this great war party will go ahead. When we come near the lodges, we will rush forward. When we make our great war cry, then those men at the edge of the village must run into the camp, and save the Ogalalas. I believe it is the best way to do this thing. But I will ask my brother, the great chief, Laughing Bird, to talk about it. Yes, I will listen to the words of the brave Ogalala leader, Spotted Bear. I have finished."

"Dacotahs, you have listened to a great man," declared Laughing Bird. "What Curly

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Horse says is true. He is a good leader. Yes, I know that he has been in many battles. I believe he has told the best way to get our brothers out of that camp. I will not say anything different. I have spoken."

"My brothers, I am an Ogalala," said Spotted Bear. "Our great chief, Wolf Robe, and Yellow Horse, the great medicine-man, are in that camp. I have come here to help them. I am the leader of my people in this fight, but I am not a great chief. No, many of our great men have been killed. That is how I was made the leader. I have fought in many battles. But I will listen to the words of those great chiefs who have just talked. I believe that they have told the best way to do this thing. No, I will not say anything against it. I have finished."

The plan suggested by the Minneconjoux chief was quickly adopted, and Curly Horse immediately called a council of the principal men in each tribe, to work out the final details of the attack against the Pawnee camp. When they finally completed their task day had already dawned.

"My brothers, I will tell you what we have

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decided to do," declared Curly Horse. "First, we will send scouts to watch the Pawnees. Then we will wait here until it is dark. When it is dark, I will ask Spotted Bear to send some of his people into that camp. Then this great war party will separate. Laughing Bird and his warriors will go on one side of the camp. I will lead the Minneconjoux in the center. Spotted Bear and the Ogalalas will come up on the other side. We will ride ahead until we find the Pawnee scouts. Then we will rush into the village. I have told you how we must do this thing."

When he had finished speaking, Curly Horse selected a number of warriors to act as scouts. These men, most of whom were Minneconjoux, immediately mounted their ponies and galloped away to watch the Pawnee camp. Then the great host of Sioux fighting men picketed their ponies, and threw themselves upon the plain to rest until the time for attacking the hostile camp arrived.

In the meantime Spotted Bear had made White Otter the leader of the gallant little company who were to invade the Pawnee vil-

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lage in an attempt to save the Ogalala prisoners. It was a great honor, and the fearless young warrior determined to justify the confidence reposed in him. He chose three famous Ogalala warriors to accompany him; they were Little Wolf, High Eagle and Black Moccasin. Besides, he asked Sun Bird and Little Raven.

"Yes, my brother, I will go with you," declared Sun Bird. "It is a great thing to do. If I come out of this fight, I will have something good to talk about."

"You have asked me to go with you to do a great thing," said Little Raven. "That makes me feel very brave. I will do the best I can."

The Sioux waited impatiently while the tedious day dragged slowly along. The scouts returned at frequent intervals, and reported about their foes. They said that the Pawnees had stationed watchers on all the ridges in the vicinity of the camp. It was evident, however, that they thought it quite unnecessary to send riders farther out on the plain to reconnoiter beyond sight of the sentinels. The Dacotahs hoped, therefore, that failing to see anything to rouse their suspicions, the Pawnees might somewhat

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relax their vigilance and make it easier for the little company of Ogalalas to enter the camp.

As twilight finally gathered upon the plain, Curly Horse sent for White Otter and the warriors who were to accompany him in his perilous undertaking. They found the stern Minneconjoux war chief and Laughing Bird waiting to receive them.

"My brothers, I have called you here to tell you what is in my heart," said Curly Horse, as the Ogalalas stood before him. "Pretty soon you are going ahead to do a hard thing. You will be in great danger. White Otter, you are the leader. You are a young man. It is true that you have done some great things. But I have seen many more winters. Yes, I have been in many more battles. You must listen to my words."

"When the great chief, Curly Horse, speaks, my ears are open," replied the young Ogalala.

"It is good," resumed Curly Horse. "Now I will tell you what to do. If you live to get to the edge of that camp, you must wait there until you hear the great Dacotah war cry.

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When you hear that, you must rush into the camp. After that you must do whatever comes into your heart. If you get your people away, then you must keep shouting, so that we will not kill you. Yes, we will be right up to the camp. Then we will go in and take some ponies. I believe it will be a great fight. Now I have told you all I know about it."

"Curly Horse, I will keep your words in my heart," White Otter assured the Minneconjoux chief. "I see that the great chief, Laughing Bird, is standing beside you. Well, I will ask him if he has any words."

"My young brother, I am not the leader of this great war party," replied Laughing Bird. "Curly Horse has told you what to do. It is enough. But I will tell you that if you do this thing, it will be something to talk about. You are standing here with those brave men who are going with you. I see that two of them are very young. It makes me feel sad. Perhaps I will never see any of you again. I see that four of you are Ogalalas, and two of you are Minneconjoux. I am an Uncapapa, but you all are my brothers. Yes, we are Dacotahs. The

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Dacotahs have hearts like the bear. It is good. Go. I have finished."

Soon afterward White Otter and his gallant little company rode away to risk their lives in the desperate attempt to save the Ogalala captives. Night had fallen upon the plain, and they had little fear of being discovered before they actually neared the Pawnee camp. Still, they determined to take every precaution, for they fully realized the heavy responsibility that rested upon them. White Otter and Sun Bird each led an extra war pony, for the use of Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. They had gone some distance when they were suddenly stopped by the sharp bark of the little gray fox.

"It is a Sioux," said White Otter.

After he had repeated the signal three times, they heard the slow, measured hoof-beats of a walking pony. A few moments afterward a Minneconjoux scout appeared out of the darkness.

"Ho, my brother, Big Weasel," said Sun Bird. "You have the ears of a fox."

"Ho, my brothers," replied the Minneconjoux. "I see that you are going ahead to do

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something. Well, I will tell you that there are Pawnee scouts watching on the ridges near the village. Now I will ask you what you are going to do."

"We are going into that camp, to help Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse," White Otter told him. "Yes, we will wait near the lodges until we hear the great war cry of our people. Then we will rush ahead to keep the Pawnees from killing our brothers."

"Well, it is a brave thing to do, but I believe you will be killed," declared Big Weasel.

"We are Ogalalas," boasted High Eagle. "Wolf Robe is our chief. Is a Dacotah afraid to die for his chief?"

Then Big Weasel left them, and they continued their perilous journey toward the south. They had gone but a short distance, however, when they heard the Minneconjoux imitate the bark of the prairie fox six times in rapid succession. They knew at once that he was advising his companions, in other parts of the plain, that a company of six Sioux were passing.

When White Otter finally came upon the dry stream-bed where he and Little Raven had con-

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cealed themselves, he warned his companions that they were nearing the ridge that hid the camp. They advanced with great caution until they came within sight of the long slope itself. Then they stopped, and, after they had muzzled the ponies, the young Ogalala issued his instructions.

"The great Pawnee camp is behind that ridge," he said, softly. "Our people are in that camp. We have come here to help them. Now I will tell you how to do it. First, I will ask my brother, Little Wolf, and my brother, Black Moccasin, to wait here with the ponies. Then I will lead Sun Bird, and Little Raven, and High Eagle to the edge of the camp. I believe that Little Wolf and Black Moccasin would like to go with us. Well, I will tell you that someone must be ready to help us with the ponies. When you hear us make the long howl of the big gray wolf, then you must rush ahead with the ponies until you find us. If you do not do this thing, then we will surely be killed. I have finished."

"My brother, it is true that I would like to go with you," declared Little Wolf, striving

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to conceal his bitter disappointment. "But I know that you have told us the best way to do. Yes, I know that we will have a hard thing to do. I believe that we will get into the fight. Well, I will wait here with the ponies."

"White Otter, I have listened to your words. You are the leader. I will do as you say," said Black Moccasin.

"It is good," replied White Otter.

Then the four daring scouts who intended to enter the camp surrendered their ponies to Little Wolf and Black Moccasin, and advanced fearlessly into the darkness on foot. They knew that each stride forward was placing them in greater peril, and the thought made them as wary as deer. White Otter led, and the others followed in his cautious footsteps. He knew that hostile scouts were on guard along the summit of the ridge, and he realized the difficulty of crawling between them without being discovered. Therefore, when he finally came within bow-shot of the low slope that caused him so much uneasiness, he asked his companions to wait while he crawled forward to investigate.

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He was gone a long time, and his three anxious comrades were growing impatient when he finally returned. He told them that he had actually crawled to the top of the ridge, and looked upon the flickering Pawnee fires. Then he asked them to follow him.

When they arrived at the foot of the slope, they stopped and spent some time listening anxiously. As they heard nothing to furnish them with a clew to the whereabouts of their foes, they saw no reason for further delay. Dropping to their hands and knees, they followed White Otter up the ridge. Just as they reached the top, however, they heard someone talking a few bow-lengths to the west of them.

Warned by a low hiss from White Otter, the alarmed Sioux prepared their weapons, and began to wriggle slowly down the south side of the ridge. They feared to move rapidly, for they knew that careless haste would be almost sure to betray them to their enemies. Their one hope was to get far enough down the slope to avoid being seen if the speakers should advance in their direction. But it soon was evident that the Pawnees were moving in the op-

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posite direction. The Sioux' hearts filled with relief at the thought. Still, they knew that the danger had not passed. A dislodged bowlder or the tell-tale rattle of sliding gravel would be quite sure to reach the sharp ears of the suspicious sentinels who had just passed. Therefore, they continued down the ridge with the greatest caution, feeling carefully with their hands and feet before they attempted to move their bodies.

Once at the base of the slope, they lost little time in advancing toward the camp. As they eventually crept within bow-shot of the lodges, White Otter again asked them to wait, while he went forward to reconnoiter. It was not long before he returned, and told them that the Pawnees were holding an important council.

"I believe that they are talking about Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse," he said.

"Did you see our people?" High Eagle asked anxiously.

"No, I did not see them," replied White Otter. "But my heart tells me that they are alive."

Then he led the way toward the hostile camp.

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They crept cautiously forward, one behind the other, keeping in the heavy shadows, and moving toward the spot from which White Otter had made his reconnoissance. It was a low, bushy knoll within leaping distance of the edge of the village. When they finally reached it, they sank to the ground and peered eagerly into the camp.

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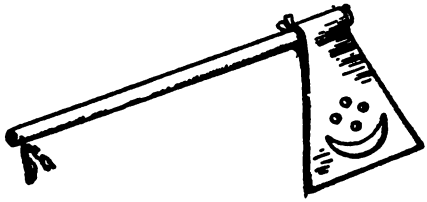

CHAPTER XIX

A SPLENDID VICTORY

THE Sioux watched the Pawnees with breathless interest. The intense emotion of the speakers, and the apparent excitement of the audience, soon convinced them that the entire tribe was on the verge of an hysterical outburst. The anxious scouts at the edge of the camp had little doubt that the fate of the unfortunate captives was the topic of discussion. The prisoners themselves were nowhere in sight. However, White Otter pointed out the lodge into which they had been taken the previous night. The Sioux looked upon it with longing eyes. The same thought was in the mind of each. Still, they knew that it would be impossible to reach the shelter without being seen. It was located some distance from the outside of the village, and the brilliant light from the fires illuminated every inch of the ground about

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it. They realized, therefore, that for the moment, at least, there was nothing to do but to wait.

"I know that man," whispered Little Raven, as a new speaker rose to address the people. "Yes, he is Yellow Cloud. He is the great war chief of all the Pawnees."

The Sioux saw a tall, broad-shouldered warrior of wonderful physique. He wore a trailing head-dress of eagle plumes, and carried a beautiful robe of the white buffalo. His appearance and manner marked him as a man of great distinction. As he began to talk, the Pawnees listened with an eager attention that promised ready obedience to his commands. The Sioux regretted that they were not nearer to him, for Little Raven had been a prisoner of the Pawnees, and was familiar with their dialect. They watched the chief with great anxiety, hoping to gain a clew to his thoughts.

When Yellow Cloud finally ended his harangue, the Sioux saw that the people had been greatly impressed. They began to talk earnestly among themselves, and it seemed as if most of them endorsed the ideas of their chief.

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Then several other warriors spoke, and as the last rose to his feet, Little Raven seized White Otter's arm with much agitation.

"That man is Standing Elk; he is a great medicine-man!" he whispered, excitedly. "Yes, I knew him when I was a prisoner in the village of the great chief, Two Moons. But Two Moons was killed by our brothers, the brave Cheyennes. Now I believe that Standing Elk is a great chief. I will tell you that his people will listen to his words. His heart is black against the Dacotahs. I believe he will ask the Pawnees to kill our people."

"Perhaps they will not kill a great medicine-man like Yellow Horse," White Otter said, hopefully.

The idea had sustained him ever since he had learned of the plight of his tribesmen. He knew that even the most bitter enemies often spared the lives of these powerful men of mystery, and he had hoped that Yellow Horse's great gifts of magic would protect Wolf Robe as well as himself. Now he began to doubt. Having learned the identity of the warrior who was apparently working himself into a perfect

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frenzy of excitement, the young Ogalala dreaded the effect on his audience. It was soon apparent that his words were changing the opinions of many of the warriors. As he proceeded with his wild harangue, a number of the younger men began to call out in approval of his talk. Their enthusiasm quickly spread to their companions, and it was not long before the vengeful medicine-man had injected his own bitterness and hate into the hearts of his listeners. The Pawnees were fast losing control of themselves. It was evident that Standing Elk was deliberately rousing them into a fury.

"That man will make it bad for our people," whispered White Otter, as his eyes flashed dangerously.

"Yes, he is putting fire into the hearts of the Wolf People," replied Sun Bird.

The Sioux longed to drive their arrows into his heart, but they knew that it would only hasten the death of the men whom they wished to save. They realized that it would be folly to act until they learned what the Pawnees really planned to do with the prisoners. Their one hope was that Standing Elk's talk would lead to

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further discussion, and more delay. The night was already half gone, and each moment gained strengthened the chances of Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse. Therefore, although they saw that his words were rousing the wrath of the people to uncontrollable bounds, the Sioux were eager for him to continue.

"If that man keeps talking, perhaps we will get a chance to do what we came here to do," said Sun Bird. "But if he stops, then I believe we will have to die with our people."

"Well, I believe that we will hear the great Dacotah war cry pretty soon," High Eagle declared, hopefully.

Then Standing Elk suddenly ended his talk, and all hope fled from the hearts of the anxious watchers at the border of the camp. The people were carried away with excitement, and the camp was instantly in a turmoil. A number of warriors had already begun to dance and sing, and others quickly joined them. As the excitement increased, several men rushed toward the lodge which the Sioux believed contained the prisoners.

"Come!" White Otter cried, recklessly. "We

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will rush into the camp, and die with our people."

"Wait," cautioned High Eagle. "Perhaps we can do something better."

The next moment proved the wisdom of his caution, for Yellow Cloud cried out in a tone of commanding authority, and the warriors who were about to enter the lodge stopped short at his challenge. As they turned, the chief beckoned for them to return, and they obeyed without a moment's hesitation. Then Yellow Cloud again addressed the council. He spoke with a ringing eloquence that compelled instant attention. The Pawnees listened in respectful silence, and it was only a few moments before he had the vast assemblage completely under his control. The Sioux looked upon him with admiration. It was a remarkable exhibition of the influence and power which this great chief exercised over his people, and the Dacotahs were much impressed.

"He is a great man," said Sun Bird.

"Yes, I believe that the Pawnees will do what ever he says," replied White Otter.

Yellow Cloud did not talk long. He spoke

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with an earnestness that carried conviction, and the Sioux would have given much to know what he said. However, they read a clew from the face and manner of Standing Elk, the warlike medicine-man. He soon made it plain that the Pawnee chief was talking against him. The Dacotahs wondered, therefore, whether Yellow Cloud was actually pleading for the lives of his captives. It seemed too much to hope, and still they realized that he might fear to kill a man possessing the mysterious powers credited to Yellow Horse. At any rate the Sioux felt quite sure that he would at least prolong the delay, and for the moment it satisfied them.

When the Pawnee chief had finished speaking, his tribesmen maintained an impressive silence. As they waited, the warriors turned their eyes upon the glowering face of the medicine-man, but Standing Elk made no attempt to resume his talk. Then Yellow Cloud called several stalwart warriors, and sent them to the lodge which apparently sheltered the Ogalalas.

"Now we must be ready to do something," White Otter told his companions.

The lodge into which the Pawnees had disap-

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peared was between the great assemblage of warriors and the border of the camp, and the Dacotahs realized that if they would help their tribesmen they must act while Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse were being taken from the lodge to the council-fire. Still, uncertainty as to what the Pawnees planned to do with the prisoners made them hesitate. The talk of the Pawnee war chief had filled them with hope, and yet the fact that he had actually sent for the captives had awakened their distrust. They knew that a word, a look, a gesture might suddenly rouse the passion of that great company of warlike people, and bring instant death upon the helpless prisoners. To delay, therefore, in the hope that Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse would survive the interview unharmed, seemed like abandoning them to their fate. White Otter and his companions realized that once the Ogalalas were engulfed in the great throng of Pawnee fighting men, all attempts to save them would be futile.

"No, there is only one thing to do," White Otter whispered, excitedly, as he watched the entrance of the lodge. "We have come here to

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help our people. When they come out of that lodge, we must do something. I will give the bark of the little gray fox. Then Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse will know that we are here. Perhaps they will try to help us. But we must be ready to rush into the camp, and do the best we can. I have told you what I am going to do. Now I will ask you to follow me."

"You are the leader; we will follow you," Sun Bird said, calmly.

Aware that the fateful moment was at hand, the Sioux nerved themselves for the desperate attempt to rescue the Ogalalas. Each member of the heroic little band knew that he was probably going to his death, and still there was not a trace of fear in the heart of any of them. Fitting arrows to their bows, they fastened their attention upon the lodge, and watched anxiously for the prisoners.

Their suspense was soon ended, however, for in a few moments the wolfskin over the entrance of the lodge was drawn aside, and two of the three Pawnee guards came out. Then Wolf Robe appeared, and a moment later Yellow Horse followed. The third Pawnee brought

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up the rear. The Sioux saw that the arms of the Ogalalas were bound, but their feet were free. At sight of them the Pawnees began to shout and jeer, and it was evident that the captives were in considerable peril of violence. They walked fearlessly forward, however, accompanied by their stalwart guards.

The prisoners had not taken three strides, when a piercing yell rose through the night, some distance to the south of the camp. The next instant the plain reverberated with the ringing war cry of the Dacotahs and the thunderous hoofbeats of their ponies.

"Come!" cried White Otter, as he sprang to his feet, and drove his arrow through the Pawnee behind the prisoners.

Sun Bird and High Eagle had already disabled the other guards, and, as Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse seized their opportunity and dashed behind the nearest lodge, their determined tribesmen at the edge of the camp covered their retreat with a deadly volley of arrows. The captives reached the border of the village in safety, and were instantly freed from their bonds by their delighted rescuers.

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"Listen, our people are here!" White Otter cried, delightedly, as the Dacotah battle cry rang out on all sides of the camp.

Rushing wildly out on the plain, the little band of Sioux raised their voices in the thrilling cry that was striking terror into the hearts of the demoralized Pawnees. They had not gone much farther than a bow-shot from the camp, when they encountered Little Wolf and Black Moccasin, racing forward in advance of the war party, with the ponies.

Once mounted, Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse dashed away toward the east, to lead their people in the attack on the Pawnee village. White Otter followed them, whooping triumphantly, and with him went Sun Bird and Little Raven.

Having been taken entirely unawares, the Pawnees were thrown into terrific confusion. A company of them rode recklessly out on the plain in pursuit of the escaped Ogalalas, and were soon surrounded and almost annihilated by a great force of Minneconjoux. The few who escaped rushed into the camp and told the people that the plain was actually covered with

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Sioux. Then Yellow Cloud rallied his warriors for the defense of the village.

"This is the work of that great Sioux medicine-man!" cried the superstitious Pawnees, as they heard their foes yelling savagely on all sides of the camp.

A few moments later the Sioux made their attack. Led by their famous war chiefs, each tribe tried to outdo the others in recklessness and bravery. They raced their ponies to the very border of the camp, and quickly fought their way into the village. Then the panic-stricken Pawnees fled before them in an effort to secure the ponies, and escape into the protection of the night. The Sioux followed close on their heels, however, and fought with a ferocity that knew neither fear nor pity. It was Yellow Horse who overtook Standing Elk, the Pawnee medicine-man, and killed him in a savage hand to hand encounter.

"Come, my brothers, these people have called us women; now we will show them how to fight!" cried Wolf Robe, as he led his warriors into the camp.

The Sioux were entirely successful, and it

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was not long before they found themselves in possession of the village. Unable to beat back the furious assault of their foes, the Pawnees had fled in wild disorder, leaving most of their ponies and all their lodges in the hands of their enemies. The Dacotahs pursued them far out on the plain, inflicting still greater punishment, and taking many prisoners. Having made their attack a complete surprise, their own losses were comparatively light, and they were wild with joy over their splendid victory.

"Men of the Dacotah nation," cried Curly Horse, as the triumphant war party gathered in the Pawnee camp, "I will tell you that we have done a great thing. It is something to tell about. When the next sun comes, we will start back to our people. We will bring them many ponies and many prisoners. When our brothers see what we have done, they will say some good things about us. Yes, they will sing about it a long time."

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CHAPTER XX

THE CROWN OF EAGLE PLUMES

SOME days later as the victorious war party approached the vast Sioux encampment, where the Ogalalas had joined the Minneconjoux and the Uncapapas, a great company of warriors galloped across the plain to meet them. When they saw Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse, alive and unharmed, they raced madly back toward the Ogalala lodges, shouting the good tidings at the top of their voices.

"Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse are alive! Yes, they are coming with the great war party!" cried the couriers.

The three camps were soon ringing with the welcome announcement, and the people were thrown into a delirium of joy. The warriors immediately began to beat the war drums, and sing their boastful songs of victory. The women, too, shouted and sang, and the entire nation united in the wild rejoicing.

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The war party halted several bow-shots from the camps, and then Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse rode toward the Ogalala camp. As they neared the lodges, the people rushed out on the plain to welcome them. When old Singing Wind saw Wolf Robe riding to meet her, she became delirious from joy.

"You have come back; it is enough!" she cried, hysterically, as she ran to meet him. "White Otter, my son, has kept his word. He has done what he set out to do."

"Yes, he is a great man," declared Wolf Robe, as he dismounted to greet Singing Wind.

Then the entire war party paraded around the border of the great encampment. It was a wonderful spectacle, and the Dacotahs realized that it might never be equalled. It was the first time that these powerful tribes had combined in one vast war company, and the oldest man in the nation could not recall having ever seen anything like it.

"Men of the Dacotahs, look at this thing a long time," cried Rain Crow, the Minneconjoux medicine-man. "Many winters have passed over my head, but I have never looked at any-

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thing like this. I do not believe I will ever see so many great warriors together again. Look, Dacotahs, and keep this great sight in your hearts. It is something to talk about as long as you live."

The great host of Sioux fighting men circled slowly around the camp, counting their coups and singing their war songs. They were led by the famous chief, Curly Horse, who shared the honor of the victory with White Otter, whom he invited to ride beside him. They were followed by the sub-chiefs and warriors of the Minneconjoux tribe. Then came Laughing Bird, and with him rode Little Raven, to whom the honor had been accorded in recognition of his courage and loyalty. They were followed by the great force of Uncapapas, men whose valor and fearlessness made them the idols of the Dacotah nation. After them followed Wolf Robe and Yellow Horse, with Sun Bird riding between them. Their appearance was the signal for an enthusiastic demonstration from the throng of spectators along the border of the camp. The Ogalala fighting force had been sadly weakened in the two furious engagements

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with the Pawnees, and many famous warriors were missing from the company. Still, these lion-hearted people sang their songs of triumph with as much spirit as their more fortunate tribesmen.

After the Dacotahs had ridden about the camp, the prisoners and the captured ponies were taken into the Minneconjoux village. Then the great company of Sioux warriors rode out on the plain, and formed in a huge square, with the three war chiefs and Rain Crow and Yellow Horse, the medicine-men, in the center. Rain Crow lighted the sacred pipe and smoked to the Great Mystery, to the earth, and to each of the four winds. Then he passed the pipe to Yellow Horse, who repeated the ceremony, and passed the pipe to Curly Horse. After each chief had smoked, the pipe was returned to Rain Crow, who emptied it, and wrapped it in the sacred medicine-bundle. Then Curly Horse addressed the Dacotahs.

"My people, my heart is filled with brave thoughts," declared the distinguished warrior, as he looked proudly upon the great throng of stern Sioux fighting men. "We have won a

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great fight. We have brought back many prisoners and many ponies. It is a great thing to tell about. Our people have been very brave. Yes, those brave Ogalalas and those two brave Minneconjoux who went to the Pawnee camp are great warriors. They got those two great men out of the camp. It was a wonderful thing to do. It makes me feel strong in my heart. Well, you will hear about it when we sit together at the council-fire. Yes, you will hear about some brave things. We will all camp together many days, and sing many songs about this great fight. Now I will ask the great chief, Laughing Bird, to say something. I have finished."

"Dacotahs, you have done a great thing," said Laughing Bird. "I have been in many battles, but that fight was the greatest of them all. My people fought very hard. But I must tell you that the great chief, Curly Horse, is a good leader. His people did some big things. Yes, I must tell you that Wolf Robe and his people were as brave as the bear. But those fearless warriors who went to the Pawnee camp were the bravest of all. When I think about it,

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I feel good in my heart. I am going to give some ponies to those brave men before I go away. I see the great chief, Wolf Robe, with us here. Well, I will ask him to tell you something."

The venerable war chief of the Ogalalas was greeted with shouts of approval as he prepared to speak. It was some minutes before the noisy ovation finally subsided. Then Wolf Robe began to talk.

"My brothers, you see me sitting on my pony, and you hear my voice," he said. "Do you know how I come to be here? Well, I will tell you about it. My brother, Curly Horse, and his people came to help me. They were very brave. My brother, Laughing Bird, and his people came to help me. They were very brave. My brother, Spotted Bear, and my people came to help me. They were very brave. All those great warriors rode a long way to get me out of that camp. But I must tell you that White Otter, and Sun Bird, and Little Raven, and High Eagle, and Black Moccasin and Little Wolf were the men who saved my life. Yes, they came to the edge of the camp, and drove their arrows through the Pawnees. They made

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it easy for us to run out of the village. I am going to ask those brave men to ride out here in front of me."

As the heroic little company rode into the center of the square to meet the chiefs, they received a stirring ovation from their tribesmen. As they lined up before the Ogalala chief, he turned and spoke a few words with his associates. Then he asked Yellow Horse to address the six heroes.

"My brothers, you have heard some good words from Wolf Robe," he told them. "Well, they are true. You have saved my life. You are very brave. Three of you are young men. It was a great thing to do. Now I am going to do something good. I am going to give three fast ponies to each of you. I have finished."

"Well, you have heard Yellow Horse," said Wolf Robe. "Now I am going to tell you something good. I am going to give Little Raven ten fast ponies, because he is very young, and he has done a great thing. I am going to give Sun Bird, and High Eagle, and Black Moccasin and Little Wolf each five ponies because they have saved my life. Now, Dacotahs, you

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must listen to what I am going to say. I am getting old. I have fought in many battles. I have led my people to many victories. It is enough. Pretty soon a young man must take my place. I have no son. But the son of Standing Buffalo, who has gone on the Long Trail, is my grandson. He has done some great things. He is as sly as the fox and as brave as the bear. He has saved my life. He has done a great thing for his people. Now I am going to take off this war bonnet. See, Dacotahs, I am going to give it to my grandson, White Otter. He is brave enough to wear it. He will lead the Ogalalas to many victories. I have spoken."

As he concluded his speech, the Ogalala war chief asked White Otter to dismount. Then he, too, slid from his pony. For a moment or so the battle-scarred veteran and the famous young warrior stood, clasping hands. Then Wolf Robe smiled, and placed the coveted headdress of eagle plumes upon the lad's head. The Ogalalas sanctioned the deed with a mighty shout of approval, and a moment afterward the entire company of Dacotahs acclaimed the young leader with the nation's ringing war cry.

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